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197 If the future viability of the myth is open to question, that of the language bond is not. A common language is a bond whose strength can hardly be overestimated; for pervasiveness and necessity no bond can match it. There are dialectical differences, particularly between north and south; a few quite regular sound shifts may cause brief difficulties in communication, and a few words have different meanings or are known only in a particular region. Nevertheless, there is almost complete mutual intelligibility. The Santal themselves are deeply [123] cognizant of language as a basis for intimacy and often indicated to me their desire that I properly learn their language. What little progress I made in this direction was greatly appreciated and always increased the intimacy which the Santal were willing to afford me. The much greater proficiency in Santali that my wife developed allowed her to be more of a Santal than I. As with the origin myth, Santali provides links with the neighboring Mundari-speaking people, though here intelligibility is not always satisfactory.

184 This is not the place to chronicle the numerous ceremonies, 776 rituals, ritual paraphernalia, deities, and religious concepts which the Santal hold in common. Apart from those important deities that belong exclusively to the various social units (house, local lineage, village, and the multi-village *Pargana*), there are a series of closely associated deities that belong to all the Santal. 776 These deities are worshiped in a variety of contexts but their 778 special abode is the "Sacred Grove" (*Jaher*), a clump of trees,* lying just beyond each village. The Sacred Grove is particularly the residence of *Maraṅ Buru*, a kind of "national spirit of

[361] [824] * These trees are left standing during the initial clearing when the village is established. They are largely *Shorea robusta* (*Sarjom*).

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776 778 [192] the Santal" as Culshaw properly describes him.[4] Other "nationally" shared deities of the Grove are *Jaherera, Liṭa, Gōsāe Era* (Hindi: *Gosain* = pious one), *Mōṛeko* (the Five) and *Tureko* (the Six).*

184 192 776 Marañ Buru is regarded as a kind of chief deity, though that honor is sometimes ascribed to Cando (literally "moon," as in Hindi, *chand*) or Siñ-Cando (sun-moon) to Ṭhakur, etc. The great variety of names associated almost haphazardly with the notion of "chief" or "biggest" deity is consistent with the acephalous Santal social structure. Nevertheless the Santal do manifest tribal solidarity, and though every house, local lineage, etc., has its own deities, Marañ Buru always receives his portion [171] of sacrifices, gift offerings ıd prayer. This constitutes another link between the Santal and other Mundari tribes of the region, who share most of these deities.

114 181 [192] Sinha has characterized Indian tribals as conceiving of the good life as one with "ample scope for indulgence in pleasure, while maintaining social obligations to corporate group or groups" (Sinha 1959:309). Culshaw similarly begins his chapter on "Dancing, Music, and Poetry" with the comment that the word "*raṣka* meaning 'pleasure' is often on the lips of the Santal, and it is dear to their hearts."[5] One could hardly begin such a chapter differently, for the traditional sense of the word "pleasure" (*raṣka*) makes it virtually synonymous with dancing

181

[4] Culshaw, *ibid.*

* *Jaherera* is sometimes called *Jaher Buḍhi* ("Old Lady of the Sacred Grove") and is said to be the consort of Marañ Buru. *Liṭa* is prominent in hunting rites; the rainbow is referred to as the "bow of *Liṭa*." As for the Five and Six, not even the most erudite of the Santal seem to have any knowledge of them other than when they are to receive offerings and prayer.

[5] Culshaw, *ibid.*, 39.

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614 to the sub-clan, one may presume that the large size of the typical sub-clan and its necessary dispersion prevent the assembling of anything more than a very limited part of its membership. This is certainly the case among the southern Santal, though I have been told that on a few occasions members of a sub-clan have assembled within a territory as broad as the whole district of Mayurbhanj. But such meetings are difficult to arrange and so costly that they cannot be frequent.

The named sub-clan, like the clan, serves to orient kin relations, and as mentioned, enables strangers to be taken into the bosom of a functioning local lineage. It is also the exogamous unit par excellence, i.e., marriage within the sub-clan is unthinkable incest while marriage within the clan, though it is forbidden and usually punished, is a much less serious offense. This difference reflects the much larger size of the clan, the relative weakness of its internal connections, and the lack of "likenesses" within its far-flung organization.

613 But it is the local lineage which has a truly corporate character, though this corporateness is largely confined to ceremonial activity. The members of this unit share common "house
613 deities" (*orak' boṅga* = house deity) and ancestral spirits, and
• 776 they celebrate these together at about two- to six-year intervals.
782 These celebrations, in which all male members of the local
[92] lineage join together, are held in fields and known as "field worship" (*thandi boṅga* = field deity). Each local lineage has its own distinctive ritual practices, and these practices tend to be kept in considerable secrecy, often being held in fields remote from any village and at hours when villagers are likely to be asleep. Some lineages maintain that anyone viewing their ritual offerings at "field worship" will be stricken ill and die. Still, a number of local lineages invite a few non-lineage members

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613 to participate in a prescribed way in this ceremony; in particu-
776 lar they are often asked to become "possessed" (*rum*) and rep-
782 resent either the spirits of the ancestors and/or Marañ Buru, the chief deity of the Santal. It is these spirits, representing as they do the unity of the Santal and the local lineage respectively, that must give their approval of the food and other offerings presented to them by the lineage. Non-members thus serve as properly objective outsiders in making this judgment, even though it is done in a state of "possession" in which they are the vehicles of the deity and spirits. It is interesting that these outsiders are frequently mother's brothers or other relatives of a woman married into the lineage; in this way the affinal connections of the local lineage are also given recognition in this ceremony.

The expressions of the Santal regarding this rite indicate that feelings of strength and bravery within the solidary lineage are closely associated with the rites performed. As one Santal put it, "Field worship is of hero Gods; by worshipping them, courage and bravery are gained by the members of the sub-lineage." Another Santal added, "Nowadays there is no warfare, but these deities are true as anything"; a third then related a famous tale of two Santal heroes who were of his sub-clan.

764 "Field worship" is inextricably intertwined with certain
[192] funerary rites (*bhaṇḍan*; Hindi: *Bhāṇḍa* = an earthen vessel)
[782] which are prerequisites for both "field worship" and marriage
[613] rites. Representatives of the local lineage must perform the *bhaṇḍan* after the death of any member. Among the northern
[484] Santal these rites are generally performed at the Damodar
[184] River; some of the southern Santal also journey to the Damodar

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626 which are held to be traditional, sacred, and true is a necessary characteristic of a society where leaders voice consensus rather than promulgate edicts and where there is no specialized police force. Perhaps the Santal are as "tradition-directed" as a society may be. This means that weight is given to tradition in making decisions, but it does not mean, as abundant evidence soon to be presented will indicate, that Santal culture is static. It means rather that the "people," like our Supreme Court, must justify their decisions in terms of real or alleged traditional precepts and practices. As our own historical experience indicates, tradition so interpreted and utilized allows for considerable flexibility. Thus it would probably be more accurate to call Santal society (and possibly other societies known for reverence of the traditional) "tradition-justifying," rather than "tradition-directed."

613 621 776 778 The dominance of a particular local lineage in a village is joined with village solidarity, just as the officials of the village are recruited from this lineage. Every village has its "headman's shrine" (*mañjhithan*); here as at the "Sacred Grove" the deities are represented by unworked stones. The central deity of this shrine is "Oldman Headman" (*Mañjhi-Haṛam*), who is the spirit of the founding father of the village, i.e., the first headman. At various ceremonies the headman or priest, accompanied by the villagers, makes offerings to Oldman Headman, who is, of course, of their lineage. By contributions to the offerings to Oldman Headman and by various formal and informal gestures, the villagers both acknowledge the authority of their village officials and participate in commemoration of village solidarity.

621 In some contexts village membership and solidarity are paramount. Fellow villagers must worship together on prescribed

796 *Matkom* (Hindi: *Mahua*; *Bassia latifolia*) which are collected
[824] and distributed as part of the ceremony.**

The manifest purpose of the *Baha* ceremony is to request the deities (*boṅga*) to prevent the occurrence of disease, a request which is made at every Santal ceremony and to provide good crops. The rites performed seem to express a general concern for the bounty of nature, respect for the village founder and his descendants, e.g., the headman and priest, and a reaffirmation of the ties of kinship, including an obligatory expression of joking behavior between "joking relatives" (*gonok' hoṛ*). The respect shown for the village founder and his descendants may, of course, be regarded as reflecting and reinforcing village solidarity.

796 The festival as practiced in the village lasts two days. On
783 the first day the priest (*Naeke*) bathes to purify himself and
787 immerses for ritual purity the implements to be used in the rites. Most of the men gather at his house and five among them become "possessed" (*rum*). Each is possessed by one of the
• [776] five major deities worshipped during *Baha*. One speaks and acts as Jaherera, the Goddess of the Sacred Grove; one as *Mõṛeko*, the Five; one as *Liṭa*; one as *Maraṅ Buru*, Great Mountain; one as *Goram Boṅga*, Old Deity, who is the spirit
[783] of Maṅjhi Haṛam, the village founder. In the possessed state the five mediums go to the Sacred Grove to see that acts of purification previously performed there by the priest, including washing the three stones representing the deities of the grove and plastering the ground with purifying cow dung, have been properly performed.

On the next day the priest, accompanied by the same five

** The former is used for wood in building and for fuel and the leaves for making plates; the latter is the source of an intoxicating drink known as *Parua*.

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priest's brothers remarked that "the working people come only when it is time to eat." The priest also complained of this, as he had done at several other ceremonies. However, there were many more present than is usual, for my camera and the prospect of having a photograph taken which might later be obtained from me was a potent lure to these people. My assistant reported almost no workers present at these same rites after I had left India. The remainder of the ceremonies are performed as in the village, except that there is no procession of dancing men and women to lead the priest back into the village.

The attenuation of the ceremony and the relative non-participation of migrant industrial workers is not significantly the result of secularization. In spite of many interviews and casual discussions about the supernatural I found little evidence of decreased belief in the deities or the efficacy of rites. Also, many of these men occasionally returned to their villages for various festivals, and when I saw such men in their native villages I found their participation as ardent and regular as that of any villager.

In my view the most important cause of this attenuation of, and non-participation in, ceremonies is limited identification with the *bustee*, and there is evidence that this is the result of migration to industrial employment. The second most important cause of attenuation and non-participation is the time demands of industrial employment.

Those who participate most regularly and fully have strong grounds for identifying with the *bustee*. Almost all are natives of Daredih. The two other regular and full participants include the only immigrant worker who has bought land in Daredih and a very early immigrant who has become assistant headman.

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668 up by being an ecstatic religious teacher known widely for his curing powers.

192 668 776 792 In the words of Esteemed Guru (*Guru Gomke*), a title conferred upon Ragnath Murmu by Jai Pal Singh, who is himself called Great Esteemed One (*Maraṅ Gomke*), the purpose of Semlet' "is to teach the people to live peaceably with belief in the deities." The Guru has had some success in spreading the notion that Dhormo is the one all-embracing deity of which all others are a part, a theory like that of Vedantic monism. The socially centrifugal tendency of such a theory is, however, ingeniously mitigated by deriving the word Dhormo from the Santali terms, *doho* = to protect, *Hor* = a way, and *om* = to capture; hence "where there is a way of salvation" (salvation = *mafti*; Hindi). Thus the Guru makes *Dhormo*, a deity often worshipped along with the traditional ones, a Santal one after all. There is no end to the Guru's linguistic derivations of this variety, the scope of which is indicated by his derivation of Sanskrit from Proto-Mundari on the basis of structural similarities. Indeed, he argues that "many believe Valmiki Risi himself to have been a Santal."

539 668 792 The Guru has written a very long epic-heroic play, *Kherwar Bir*, which serves as a Santal equivalent of the Mahābhārata. The word *Kherwar* is an heroic designation for Santal; *Bir* means forest in Santali. The essence of the plot is that the Santal, then known as Kherwar and the possessors of a great kingdom, lose a war with a people who have the attributes of Hindus, the victors taking many members of the royal family prisoner. The Guru deftly reverses the usual Hindu pattern by having the Santals' opponents be cannibals prepared to eat their Santal prisoners. Fortunately, a young Kherwar prince, following the call of duty in spite of great danger, succeeds in

2: Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

EDITOR'S PREFACE

It having proved impossible to get this translation published before the author's death the manuscript was left in the care of Professor O. Solberg, who had repeatedly rendered invaluable assistance in bringing out other important works of his and who has since then published his SANTAL RIDDLES and his WITCHCRAFT AMONG THE SANTALS, Oslo 1940. At his request I have undertaken to act as editor of the translation, and I am happy to be able to do this last service to a deceased friend.

I have considered it to be my duty to check the translation with the original Santal text wherever I was in doubt, but I have only occasionally found it necessary to make some slight and insignificant verbal changes. On the whole I have faithfully reproduced the readings of the manuscript.

I have felt more free with regard to the numerous and sometimes rather long notes which had been added and which were sometimes apt to divert the reader's attention from the text itself. Since the translation was drafted some important works of our author have been published, and his SANTAL DICTIONARY, Oslo 1932—1936, is in reality a comprehensive encyclopaedia of Santal lore. A reference to its statements usually gives full information about such details which would else have to be explained in lengthy notes. I have therefore to a considerable extent substituted such references for the notes of the manuscript.

The text here laid before the ethnologist is a genuine account of Santal traditions and institutions, taken down from the mouth of Kolean, an old Santal, who had learnt it from his own teacher. We cannot say how far back these traditional tales can be carried, from generation to generation. But as we have them before us, they are evidently the result of a comparatively long development.

We know nothing about the different phases of this development. It is evident that there are borrowings from Aryan sources, but it is also clear that a considerable portion is genuine Santal lore, and it is often difficult to distinguish between both elements. Thus the name Ṭhakur of the vague supreme god seems to be Aryan; and such is certainly the case with his additional designation Jiu 'soul, spirit'. But that does not imply that the whole conception is Aryan. Several customs and institutions described in the text have admittedly been taken over from the Hindus, but also here there are numerous doubtful points, which only future research can clear up.

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539 One day Liṭṣ[13] came to them and said to them: "Where are you, grandchildren? How are you? I am your grandfather; I have come to pay you a visit. I see you are well; but there is one great joy that you have not tasted. Do brew beer, it has a very sweet taste". Then he taught them to prepare the fermenting stuff. All three went to the forest. Liṭṣ showed them the roots. The two dug up and brought these. When they had brought them Liṭṣ said to Pilcu Buḍhi: "Now you make the rice wet for us". She did so. Having made it wet she pounded it into flour; they jabbed the "medicine" (fermenting stuff), they squeezed it and kneaded the flour with the "medicine"-juice; having kneaded it into a dough they made balls of it; having made the balls they put these into a basket together with straw and put this aside. When next day came, at the time they had made the balls, at the same time they uncovered them; having done this they threw the straw away and spread (the balls) out on a winnowing-fan; spread out there the balls became dry, and they put them aside. When this was done they gathered the sumtu bukuḍ and sama ears and pounded them. They boiled the grain and thereupon let it cool; when cooled they kneaded the fermenting stuff into it; thereupon having assembled all they covered it up in leaves and kept it there. In five days the fermentation was complete. In the afternoon they poured water on it. Then Liṭṣ said to them: "Now both of you drink this after first having poured on the ground some to Marañ buru. To-morrow I shall come again and visit you".

Thereupon they made three leaf-cups and filled these; having done this they poured on the ground the contents of one in the name of Marañ buru; then they drank themselves. When they were drinking, they commenced to toy amorously; continuing this they both drank all and also became very drunk. It became night, they lay down together.

When it became dawn Liṭṣ suddenly came. He called out to them: "How is it, grandchildren, have you got up or not? Do come out". When they had regained consciousness they recognized that they were both naked and felt very ashamed; therefore they answered him: "O grandfather, how can we possibly go out; we are awfully ashamed; we are both of us naked; last night when we had become drunk from beer, we have done something bad".

Liṭṣ then said to them: "It does not matter". And smiling to himself he went away. To cover their shame Pilcu Haṛam and Pilcu Buḍhi made a skirt and a loin-cloth for themselves of ficus-leaves. Now they got children, seven boys and seven girls. The name of the eldest boy was Saṇḍra, the one following him was Saṇḍhom, the one after him was Care, the one following him was Mane, and the youngest one was Acaredelhu. The eldest girl was Chiṭṣ, the following Kapu, the one after her was Hisi, and one was Ḍumni. We have forgotten the names of the others.

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[13] Liṭṣ is said to be the real name of the principal bonga of the Santals, always referred to as Marañ buru, lit., the great mountain. Liṭṣ sij, the name for a rainbow.

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881 [776] [273] [302] them all at the same time. If a child should die before having been through this ceremony, they do not cremate such ones and do not carry their bones to the Damuda river.

A man wants to have the caco chaṭiar for his children; he brews beer and procures oil and turmeric to anoint the village people. Then he calls the village headman and his deputy and pours beer out to these two. They ask him: Look here, you, what beer is this that you are giving us? He says: This, father, is intimation-beer; I am minded to do so and so, that is to say, I am going to have caco chaṭiar for my children. This happens in the morning. After having drunk the beer the village headman and his deputy [793] send the Goḍet to call the village people[7]. They come; when they are assembled, the village girls first anoint the village priest and his wife sitting on a mat; thereupon they anoint the field priest and his wife, after them the village headman and his wife, thereupon his deputy and this one's wife, the custos morum and wife, his deputy and wife, the messenger and wife, and finally they anoint all the (men and) women of the village. Now they serve beer round. First they give the village headman and his deputy, thereupon all the people. When one round has been served they ask the father of the children: For how many is this? He answers: For so and so many. Then so many children as are to have the caco chaṭiar, so many rounds of beer they serve, each round four leaf-cups to each. Then they ask the father of the children: How many iṛi and how many erba of yours have shot into ears[8]? He says: So many iṛi and so many erba have shot into ears. They say in reply: Very fortunate. Then they ask him: Whereabouts are the countries? The children's father then names the countries where the grandparents of the children live. Then they call for the namesake-beer. Now the grandparents of the [603] children give the village people beer that they have brought with them from their homes. [539] Thereupon the village people dance singing:

Along here, along in this direction are Nilgai tracks,
Along here, along in this direction are Nilgai hind tracks.

Track, track the Nilgai tracks,
Follow, follow the Nilgai hind tracks.

On the tank embankment are Nilgai tracks,
On the river bank are tracks of the Nilgai hind.

Tie on him (her), O mother, a golden bell,
Fasten on him (her) O mother, hollow sounding bells.

[192]

[7] Nowadays the Jog Maṛjhi is generally asked to call the people together; the people sit in rows on straw spread out for the purpose. [8] I. e., how many girls and how many sons have been born to you? iṛi in Pankuma Crum-guill, L., fig. used about a girl; erba in Gaturia Italian, Kurath., fig. used about a boy.

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of the villagers will become wealthy. In the directions in which the ants have carried off rice, in so many directions it will be necessary to bring up bongas. If the water in the narrow-mouthed pot has dwindled a little, they say about this: A couple of years we shall have a scarcity of water. And if the water has not dwindled at all, they say: We shall not have any scarcity of water. If the fowls have disappeared, if there is no rice, and the water in the narrow-mouthed pot has dried up, they say: This place is ill-fated; and they leave it; they will not found a village there.

But if there are good omens from the fowls, the rice and the water in the narrow-mouthed pot, then they dig a small four-cornered hole. On three sides of this they put the dug-out earth. With this earth they again fill the hole up. If it is filled with the earth on two sides, they say: We shall get full crops here; and if no earth is left (in filling the hole), they say: It is inauspicious here. Thereupon they seek omens in another high place inside the boundary that they have walked up, and in the name of another village headman. They continue to act in this way, until they get full good omens. They ultimately get this.

b. On settling down.

Now one day they return and make a shelter of sticks leaning against each other, for the leader. He, the leader, who is to become the headman of the village, cuts down the first tree. Nowadays, after they have investigated the forest, they ask the landowner for permission; formerly, before landowners made their appearance, there was nothing of this kind.

Together with the leader they now divide between themselves the homestead fields. On their respective homestead fields they each put up a hut for themselves, and each a pen to keep their cattle in. Thereupon they go back to their old homes and call on each other saying: When shall we start? They then take their children and all they possess with them and go to the new village. The time of moving is the months of Phalgun and Chait (middle of Febr. to middle of April). Now all of them clear the jungle for the homestead fields, and the trees they have cut down also serve them for house-timber. Any remaining timber, etc., they burn away. They build houses. Running along the middle of the place they keep a village street, and at the end of this they arrange a sacred grove.

c. Bringing up the bongas in the sacred grove.

To bring the bongas up in the sacred grove they get three to four men who are to become possessed[1]. They come together at the village headman's. The headman pours out water for the persons to be possessed, that they may wash. The men to be possessed then wash their feet and sprinkle water on their head. Thereupon they sit down in a row beside each

[1] See Dictionary s. v. rum.

782 other. They put a winnowing-fan in front of each of them. Thereupon they give each of them one handful of sun-dried rice in the winnowing-fan. The men who are to be possessed then with the right hand rub the sun-dried rice in the winnowing-fan; now the village people call out: Come, Lords, the Five, the Lady of the sacred grove, the Pargana, Maraṅ buru, Gosāe era, and Maṅjhi haṛam, we are calling upon ye, invoking ye. Thereupon the four men become possessed and turn their heads violently round. Speaking through the mouth of the possessed men the bongas say sāḥāḵ (it is all right); thereby the village people understand that the bongas have taken possession of the inspired ones.

776

They then ask them: Now then, adored King, worshipped Lord, the landowners, the Muṇḍas with horses, with umbrellas, to the end of the lowland, to the end of the country they run about, hurry about, the spirits, the mountain spirits, be it five, be it twenty-five, with disciples, with pupils sitting, having seated themselves, in hurry, in haste, calling out, crying, the stone door having been opened, been opened a little, like a cow with calf, like a milch cow they come running, they come in haste; Well then, Lord Father, my Ṭhakur, the race, the birth, when this is told, is shown, then only we shall know, shall recognize, it is this spirit, this mountain-spirit, then only below the Pipol tree, below the Banyan tree the principal stool, the principal wooden slab to sit on will be placed before him, be spread out before him, then only we shall worship him, pay homage to him[2].

The bongas then reply: Look then, be it five, be it twenty five with disciples, when you sit down with pupils, you have seated yourselves, when you have taken hold of, have seized a Mahle[3] winnowing-fan, when we discovered, found out about the cleaned rice, the mixed rice, like a cow with calf, like a milch cow I came running, I came in haste, what my race, my birth may be, I might show twelve shapes, show twelve meanings, what it is, is fully true, otherwise all is up. Wealthy people, stallions, at the back of the house, in the eaves, gold, silver they bury, put away; for what purpose should I bury, put away my race, my birth; what is, truly with happiness, with easy circumstances I may strengthen, I may apportion, it is fully up. Consequently, whoever I may be, in the Ganges river, in the Soṛa river my race, my birth, I may bathe, may wash my hair, with happiness, with easy circumstances I may strengthen, may apportion, it is fully up. Shopkeepers, pedlars for a seer of paddy, a basket of paddy they sell away, throw down oil, salt; as for me race and birth, whatever it may be, for a seer of paddy, for a basket of paddy I may sell it away, throw it down, with happiness, with easy circumstances I may strengthen, may apportion it, it is fully up. This is well and all. So look out, I am Jahar era (the Lady of the sacred grove).

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[2] So far as possible a literal translation of the here following invocations and answers is given; they convey very little meaning to the ordinary Santal, if they are at all understood. This, however, is not needed.

[3] i. e., made by a Mahle. The Mahles are workers in bamboo, besides being agriculturists and palanquin bearers.

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The village people then say: Greetings, Lord! After this every single bonga, one after the other, speaks the same, only at the end they name their different names. 782 776

Thereupon the village people take the rice in the winnowing-fan up in their hands, and handing it into the hands of the possessed ones they say to them: Here then, Lord Father my Thakur, the broken grain, the rice grain have no eyes, have no ears. Having understood, having satisfied yourselves in your soul, in your breast, in your mind, in your body, tell us, show us, we are blind, ignorant human beings; when we speak, it stops in our throat, we are choked in the words; therefore do not keep it, do not let it stick in your soul, in your breast; in the house of Jolhas[4], in the house of Dhunias[5] stuck thread, stuck cotton is caught up, sticks; like split bamboo, like thread stretched out make ye a way, make ye a road, Lord Father my Thakur.

The bongas then answer: Look out then, brothers, younger and older, sitting down, having seated ourselves we have understood, have satisfied ourselves as to water-country, salt-country, for whom it may be, in our souls, in our breasts we may put it, may stick it. Thereupon they say: Well that is all, it is good.

Thereupon the village people say: Please then, Lord, where shall we make a place of worship for ye, make a place for ye to stay? Now the bongas got up and go towards the forest. They find and take along some stones. Having brought them to the place they put them down, as they think well, at the foot of trees, three in a row beside each other at one place, each stone at the foot of a separate tree, one representing the Lady of the sacred grove, one representing the Five, and one Marak buru. Again going to the forest they bring three stones. One representing Gosae era they put down at the foot of a Mahua tree, one representing the old Pargana they put down at the foot of any tree, and the one representing Majhi haram they bring to the village street and put it down in the street outside the house of the village headman. Here they later on build a structure, the Majhi than.

They then sit down at the place where they first were. And the village people say: Please, Lord, by whose hand are ye pleased to be worshipped and offered to? Find a priest for yourselves. And they place a lota with water in front of them. The bongas then get up. The Lady of the sacred grove takes the lota with water, and the bongas call out: Ei (hallo there). Taking this lota with water along the bongas choose the priest for themselves among the men. Any one they like, on his head they pour out the water in the lota.

Now all the people stand up, and the man they have chosen to be priest puts the bongas (stones) nicely down, one after the other, and he plasters them with cow-dung, and he smears sindur on all the bongas.

Now they are going to restore the possessed bongas to consciousness. The priest gives the rice in the winnowing-fan into the hands of the possessed bongas. Then they say to

[4] Mohammedan weavers. [5] Mohammedan cotton-cardors.

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782 them: Please, Lords, the promise you gave is a promise, your promise is a golden promise,
ours is a skin promise, please give us a hand-given promise, before you leave. A promise
776 given is a promise, a promise of luck and good fortune, may they never become false and
worthless. Thereupon the bongas, one after the other, give to the priest the rice they have
in their hand. The village people then say: Please, Lords, it has been a long time, and
it is very late, the horses, the umbrellas in the Siá forest, the Man forest[6], dig and fill
their stomach with hasa vegetables, with ḍimbu vegetables[7]. Then the possessed men
regain consciousness. The rice mentioned the men who were possessed take. And having
reached the village they enter the headman's house, where they give them food. This is
the way in which the bongas are brought up in the sacred grove.

d. The assistants of the village headman.

622 Thereupon all the men come together at the Mṛñjhi (the village headman). He has
624 brewed beer. Now as he deems the men in the village fit, in accordance with this he chooses
some to assist him in the village; he appoints them to positions: You become our Paranik,
you become our Goḍet. And if there are sufficient people, he will at the same time also
appoint a Jog Mṛñjhi and a Jog Paranik. And one for whom it is possible to offer
his own blood, he will appoint to be Kuḍam Naoke. He gives them beer; they drink
and then gradually go home.

622 The Mṛñjhi is the head of the village people. All people in the village will have to
follow his lead. In ordering and inviting, in calling and restraining, at the namegiving, at the
initiating festivals, at marriages, when hunting and chasing, at feasts and festivals, at
religious instruction and worship, in connexion with rice and curry, with beer and liquor,
with spirits and mountain spirits, in quarrelling and squabbling, in strife and dispute, when
there is hunger and thirst, with landlords and money-lenders, when crime and misdeeds
occur, in connexion with thefts and stealing, with medicine and witchcraft, with wenches
and strumpets, when there is fighting and killing, murder and wickedness, in grief and
sorrow, in calamities and dangers, in illness and pain, at dying and falling away, at cere-
monies in connexion with death and decease, at cremation and the final funeral ceremonies:
in connexion with all this the Mṛñjhi has the responsibility.

624 The Paranik is the headman's assistant, like a prime minister, and when there is no
Mṛñjhi, the Paranik rules the village. If the headman should run away, and there are
no sons or male relatives of his, the Paranik becomes Mṛñjhi. Or if the Mṛñjhi dies
without having sons, and there also are no male relatives of his in the village, then also
the Paranik becomes Mṛñjhi.

[131] [137]

[6] The Siá and Man forests seem to have reference to the Singbhum and Manbhum districts to the South-west of the Santal Parganas. Santals have been and are still living in these districts. [7] Hasa is a Basella; ḍimbu a creeper.

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IX. RELIGION AND WORSHIP

a. Ṭhākur.

• 776 In the primeval age we had no bongas[1]. During our wanderings we have got them. The Siṅ boṅga (Sun or Day spirit) we also got on our way in Siṅ duṛ (the Sun or Day pass). The primeval ancestors were worshipping only Ṭhākur. Having got the bongas we have gradually forgotten Ṭhākur; only the name is left. The people of the present age have mostly forgotten also the name; only we who have learnt the story of the ancestors and a few old men are remembering his name. In the present age the Santals say the Siṅ boṅga is presumably Ṭhākur; therefore, when worshipping, they look towards the sun and call this their Ṭhākur; but our ancestors of old have handed over to us, viz., to us gurus, that Ṭhākur is different; he is not seen by human eyes; but he himself sees all. He himself has created earth and heaven, the human beings, the animals, the birds and winged beings, the insects, the snakes and reptiles, the fishes and crabs, the trees and plants, the paddy and rice, the bajṛa and Indian corn, all and everything, and he supports all, small and big, he feeds us all. He is the one who brings us here, he is the one who takes us away. By the word of the bongas and the mountain spirits or of a human being we are not born, nor do we go away; Ṭhākur has measured out to us our seer, and until this is finished, no one is able to take us away. As we are living here, in the same way we shall, when we have gone to the other world, get good or bad by his order.

[178]

773 The Sun bonga we call a good bonga: he brings the dawn, he brings the evening; he gives us warm sunshine, he gives us rain; therefore at the time of religious observances we appeal to him. He is the man, and the moon is his wife, and the stars are their children. The ancestors have told, it is reported, that these two, husband and wife, had very many children. The sons stayed with their father, and the daughters with their mother. Due to the heat of the sun and the day-stars it was felt like being burnt on the earth. The moon then said to the sun: We shall eat our children; otherwise humanity will be destroyed. The husband then said: Do you eat your daughters first; if the human beings do not get any relief thereby, I shall eat mine also.

[1] See Dictionary s. v.

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Then the moon (woman-kind, we know their craftiness) covered all her daughters up in a huge basket; thereupon she went to the old man and said to him: I have eaten and made an end of all my ones; how is it, the hot rays are not abating. Only if you also eat your sons, then only will the human beings be saved. In this way the old wife outwitted the old man; the foolish old man complied with what the woman said and really ate all his sons. It became night, O great mother, he saw them, all her ones are there. Then he became furiously angry, and taking his sword he pursued and reached the old woman and cut her; he might have made an utter end of her; but as the old woman gave him two daughters, she cooled him down a little. 773

Even now he continues to pursue her; and when he remembers her craftiness, he cuts her, month after month; only when the old man's soul çools down, the moon gets a little relief for a couple of days. The names of the two daughters, that the old man got, are Bhurkā[2] and the evening star.

As most of the people of the present age erroneously call Sin bongs Ṭhākur, in the same way they call all bongas their Ṭhākur when they make an invocation. They invoke them saying: Be greeted, Lord, Father my Ṭhākur. In this way they are honouring them, in order that they may help them with pleasure; otherwise they are not Ṭhākur; they are only bongas. 776

b. The bongas.

Among the bongas the Sun bonga is our great bonga. After him comes the Jom sim bonga; after him Marāṅ buru (his real name is Liṭā), after him Jahēr era, the Lady of the sacred grove (her real name is Ram Sāigi), after her Mōṛṅko Turuiko, The Five (we certainly praise The Six, but we do not sacrifice to them), after these Gosāe era (her Ladyship), after her Pargana-haṛam, after him Mānjhi haṛam bonga, after him the (Oṛāk) House bonga, and after him the Abge bonga. Besides these the ojhas have separate bongas[3]; persons who wish to become rich worship Wealth-bongas[4]. There are boundary bongas, bongas of the hollowed-out water-holes in rivers, bongas of the water-pools, bongas of tree-roots and stumps, forest bongas, mountain bongas, and so on.

The Abge[5] bongas are numerous; the different septs have different ones; the same is the case with the House bongas[6] also. Those of the same sept are not the same either, while those of different septs also may be the same. The name of the Abge bonga and of the House bonga they do not make known to other people, neither do they tell their women-folk. 614 776 784

[2] The morning star, Venus. The word is borrowed from Hindi. [3] The names of the numerous bongas invoked by the ojhas will be found in the writer's paper Studies in Santal Medicine and Connected Folklore, Part I, p. 64 ff. Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. X. [4] See Dictionary s. v. hisāṛ bonga. [5] See Dictionary s. v. [6] See Dictionary s. v. Oṛāk bonga.

614 When an old man is dying, he tells the name in a whisper to his eldest son, before he
776 departs. From primeval times we gurus know the names of the Abge bongas and House bongas of all septs. The Abge of some of the Hāsdak̄ sept is Dhara Sōṛē or Dhara Saṇḍa (of the Nij Hāsdak̄ sept), and Kaṭkom Kudrạ, and their House bonga is Bāspahaṛ and Desoali. The Abge of the Kisku sept is Campa dana gaṛ, and their House bonga is Sōa; the Abge of the Hembrom sept is Gaṛsiṅkạ and Lilạ cạndi, and their House bonga is Gurṣiạ. The Abge bonga of the Mạrṇḍi sept is Dhanghara and their House bonga Gurṣiạ. The Abge bongas of the Murmu sept are Kudrạ Cạṇḍi, Bahaṭa, Duạr Sōṛē, Kudraj, and Gosāe Rae, and their House bonga is Baṭpahaṛ; the Abge bonga of the Soren sept is Acṛạli, and their House bongas are Gurṣiạ and Sar Cạṇḍi; the Abge bonga of the Ṭuḍu sept is Dhanghara, and their House bonga Ṭhuṇṭạ turaṣ; the Abge bonga of the Baske sept is Desoali, and their House bonga is Baṭpahaṛ; and the Abge bonga of the Besra sept is Campa dana gaṛ, and their House bonga is Sōa. The names of the Abge bongas of the Pāṇriạ sept and of the Cōṛē sept I have forgotten.

776 The Jom sim[7] bonga is also different with them. Some call their Jom sim bonga Panhar, others Anhaṛ, others Boerạṅgi, others Seowani, others Baraṅ baraṅ, and again others Baḍha Ahaṅ. The bongas of the ojhas are Siṅbạhni, Maraṅ buru, Kạmru guru, Sidhạ guru, Gaṇḍo guru, Lohbor guru, Buạṅ guru, Jitu guru, and others, and the guru from whom the ojha has learnt. The name of one wealth-bonga is Kal Cāora. The wealth-bongas, people tell, steal from other people and bring it to their own master. Now and then wealth-bongas rob each other, it is told, and the master of the one among them who gains, he gets much wealth. Now and then, people tell, the wealth-bongas have been driven away by people. One day a wealth-bonga was carrying paddy in a sling away from a man's threshing-floor; just then the owner of the paddy happened to come, and taking him to be a thief, he threw something at him making a great deal of rattling noise; he chased him right up to the house of his master. The bonga got quickly inside and was running about all over and in the sacred closet, making a rumbling sound; he broke all the earthenware pots and vessels into pieces. The man who was chasing him called out to the master of the house and made him get up and reviled him to his heart's content; he said to him: This is your stealing bonga; I have chased him and driven him inside your house; who knows for how long a time he has been bringing my things here; therefore nothing matures for me. From that time on, whenever this man came to the house of these people, the bonga ran in fear about all over and in the sacred closet, making a rumbling sound; therefore the master of the house implored that man, saying: Don't come to us; in fear of you the bonga is breaking all we have into pieces.

[7] See Dictionary s. v.

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The Jǫm sim bonga was not from the beginning; at the Jǫm sim festival they were offering only to the Sun bonga. They had, it is told, had a sacrifice to their Abgs. When they had eaten and were going home, they forgot a battle-axe and left it there. When they remembered this on their way, one of them ran back to fetch it. To this man the Jǫm sim bonga revealed himself; he was picking up and eating what was lying scattered there. While he was eating the bonga was talking to himself: Oh, now I have felt pleased for the first time. Then seeing the man, he disappeared. The man brought the battle-axe, but he did not tell them of the bonga that had revealed himself. After this they got a good deal of fever, so that they were near dying. Then they had some divination made for them. The ojhas told them: Some bonga or other is revealing himself to you. Then the man who had fetched the battle-axe remembered what had happened to him, saying: Really I saw him when I was fetching the forgotten battle-axe. I heard him say: Now I have felt pleased for the first time. Therefore they called this bonga Ahaṅ. The ojhas said to them: This bonga says: Offer to me at the Jǫm sim festival. From that time the Santals worship him.

c. Worship and festivals.

The Sowing fowl is the first offering of the year[3]. In the month of Asaṛ (middle of June to middle of July) we eat the sowing fowls, in the name of sowing and scattering the seed. Every house has to give one fowl. The village priest offers these in the sacred grove. He offers one fowl to each, to Maraṅ buru, Jaher era, Mǭṛǭko, Gosāe era, Pargana, and Maṅjhi haṛam. He offers one black fowl to the bonga of the surrounding boundary. The remaining fowls he offers to the bongas along the boundaries; and if there are fowls left, they kill them wringing their necks. They do not offer them in a lump, but each separately. They make an invocation, as follows: Be greeted then, Father my Ṭhakur, Jaher era (or Maraṅ buru, and so on), here then in the name of the Sowing fowl this is given to thee, handed to thee; we shall sow in one place, in twelve places may it shoot up in tufts, may they blow and bring, flood and bring rainy season rain, burning rain; into this village, this hamlet do ye not let suffering and sin, disease and illness, stomach-ache or headache enter, penetrate; with golden slings, with golden shoulder-yokes ye will carry it away on your shoulders, ye will carry it away with shoulder-yokes to another side, another boundary, Father my Ṭhakur. Widows, women of ill omen, a torn leaf, a folded leaf they will select for destruction, will doom; so then do not ye let them get good omens, favourable signs; then one day, half-a-day they will pry, stand on tiptoe, do not let any spell be thrown, any hurt be done, the calf-mothers, the goat-mothers may they wander about, walk about satisfactorily, the Siṅ forest, the Man forest, the half-grown dogs may ye press down, cover up, Lord, Father, my Ṭhakur.

[3] The Sowing fowl, the fowls sacrificed in connection with the sowing of paddy.

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[539]

The priest is in the court-yard, girls,
The reddish white horse;
The priest is in the place outside, girls,
The reddish companion mare.

Moving up and down, moving up and down, girls,
Is the reddish white horse;
Swaying, swaying, girls,
Is the reddish companion mare.

Bind on him the bells, girls,
On the reddish white horse;
Tie on to her the jingle-belt, girls,
On the reddish companion mare.

The dancing ones dance, and the beer-drinkers drink beer. Until sunset they dance in the house of the priest singing Flower-festival songs; and when the sun has set, they go to outside the house of the village headman and dance lagṛē in the village street. When they have finished dancing, they go to their respective homes to lie down and sleep.

The next day the priest of the outskirts takes the Godet along with him and goes to the forest. Here he pricks himself and offers the blood to the Pargana bongs and the others. At all offerings he acts in the same way.

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Offering to the Abge we have every year, sometimes in Aghăr (middle of November to middle of December), sometimes in Asar (middle of June to middle of July), there is nothing fixed. To the Abge bongs we sometimes give fowls, sometimes pigs, and sometimes rams. Marak buru and the others with him are bongas common for all, but the Abge bongs belongs to each one separately. The Abge bongas watch over their respective families, in order that no fever or pain, no epidemics, no witchcraft, and no deaths or calamities shall befall them. Santals say, it is told, that if witch women get hold of the Abge bongas, then the members of the family have no possibility of being saved; they will die; therefore they exert themselves to keep their Abge bongs satisfied. And if they make vows to them at times of danger, they will stand up and save them. When they sacrifice to the [593]
Abge, only brothers invite each other and eat, the men only; they do not give the women [562]
anything. In the open field, near a white-ant hill they perform the sacrifice to the Abge bongs; the invocation is not different, it is the same at all sacrifices.

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Also to the boundary bongas they make sacrifices every year, that is, those who plough in the places where the bongas are. The boundary bongas are very jealous; if they are not kept satisfied, they kill awfully; in a moment they make snakes appear; they make tigers eat you, or they cause disease to come suddenly; therefore we fear them very much.

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and we are quick to sacrifice to them. We give them fowls twice every year, at rice planting and harvesting. When we sacrifice to them, there is no magic square, there is no sindur either, nor is there any religious abstinence, and the invocation is only a few words; we say to them: Beware then, so and so's Boundary bonga, look here, I am giving thee, handing thee in the name of harvesting (or planting); may there be no sudden fear, no sudden alarm. Except women all eat the sacrifice. People say, it is told, that if only you of the family eat, or if you take anything home, then the boundary bongas will enter the house and exterminate the whole family of that house.

These are our real annual festivals and offerings. On the last day of the month of Aghăr we have a kind of festival, called sahar lupḍal[31]: we press cakes and eat them; but we make no sacrifices. From the Dekos we have from time to time taken over many festivals; but among these there is only one festival that we, the whole village celebrate, viz., the Karam[32]. At that time we offer belaṅja flowers[33], sun-dried paddy, dhubi grass, oil, and sindur to Kŗmu and Dhŗmu, and on the karam branch we put, as a screen, a piece of cloth two cubits long. At other festivals taken from the Dekos only the man who celebrates it, worships, and we go to look at it; we do not worship. At the Durga festival such people offer to Durga, at the Kali festival they offer to Kali, at the Monsa festival they offer to Monsa, at the Chata festival they offer to the Chata bonga, at the Pata festival they offer to Mahadeb, and at the Jatra festival they offer to Hanuṁ, the Jatra bonga. But as these festivals do not belong to us, Santals do not act rightly offering to the bongas of other races. On account of this our bongas are angry with us; it becomes like the state of having a wife and a co-wife, we are not making anybody satisfied. We have got much confusion in connexion with the bongas. You Europeans have only one bonga; you are very fortunate, because you worship the Thakur, who has made us.

To the Jom sim we do not sacrifice every year, only now and then. To the Sin (sun or day) bonga we offer one goat, and to the Jom sim bonga we offer one goat or a ram on that occasion. The invocation is not different; only at the end we say to the Sin bonga: We are not able to do this every year, do not therefore take offence, be displeased.

Our ancestors of old have left us a word, viz.: Once in your life, somehow or other, do sacrifice to the Sin bonga, even when you are poor, and when you have the means, do sacrifice to him every fifth or sixth year, otherwise he will not call you good in the next world. In the primeval age they were offering only to the Sin bonga; the Jom sim bonga they have added afterwards. Since we have got venereal disease from the Dekos, we make vows to the Sin bonga to be cured from it; this they call "pair offering". They say, it

[31] The meaning of this expression is uncertain; sahar is regularly used about dung, especially cow-dung, and lupḍa (or lupḍal) about rubbing, plastering with cow-dung. One might therefore be tempted to take it as meaning renovation after the ravages of the rainy season. [32] See Dictionary s. v. [33] Cassella axillaris, Roxb.

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is told, that Sita made a vow to get a venereal disease when Rabon carried her away to the Lonka (Ceylon) fortress. At that time, it is told, the Sin bonga caused Sita to get a venereal disease, because she made a vow to him; thereby Sita's honour remained unviolated.

The Mañ Mõṛẽ sacrifice occurs only now and then, when all the people of a village make a vow on account of some great calamity. And when a rumour comes from the country that the Mõṛẽko Turuiko have become sulky, then also they have a Mañ Mõṛẽ sacrifice. They sacrifice goats and fowls to all the bongas of the village. Except the wife of the village priest no woman gets cooked rice with curry of the flesh of the sacrificed animals and birds; all the men get it. They perform the Mañ Mõṛẽ sacrifice in the sacred grove. The young men and girls dance the whole night, singing Flower-festival songs.

The Kuṭam ḍañgra (ox felling) sacrifice is only one man's business; but all the village people eat the flesh and cooked rice. The man who celebrates this fells one ox in the name of the ancestors; he beheads one ox in the name of the house bonga, and also in the name of Marañ buru he beheads one ox. The ox that is felled he fells at the foot of an atnañ tree, after first having made it eat from rice on a leaf-plate; and the two other bullocks he makes eat from small heaps of rice, after having made a magic square with flour at the foot of a Sal tree; thereupon he beheads them.

The Kuṭam ḍañgra sacrifice is performed when they have the Jom sim, or some vow has been made. Since we have come under the feet of the Dekos, we have the Kuṭam ḍañgra sacrifice at night, because the Deko landowners impose heavy fines if they get to know of it[34]. The meat of the ox that is sacrificed in the name of the house bonga, that is to say, the meat of the side on which it falls down, and the head, only the people of the family eat, otherwise the people of the whole village all eat. The village headman and his deputy and the Goḍet get one thigh, viz., of the felled ox as their share. The Parmañk gets the part of the thigh highest up, the headman gets the middle and the Goḍet the lower part. They take out a neck part for the village council. This they call the neck part of the girls. Outside in the field they eat a hash made only of the head and the liver and lungs. The meat the people of the different houses make into equal portions and take home; the whole family eat it.

[34] The landlords being Hindus object to bullocks and especially cows being killed.

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h. About digging out bongas.

To dig out bongas is also a work we have. We make the ojhas dig, if it has been 754
proved that a bonga has been buried. Witches deposit (bury) bongas in the house or 755
cowshed of some person, in order that these people may die. On such occasions we fetch an ojha, that is to say one who knows how to dig out bongas. Not all ojhas know this. The ojhas first make divination, to find out where the buried bongas are. When they have ascertained this, they dig out the bongas. We have seen bongas that have been dug out. Deposited bongas are of two kinds. One kind of bonga is a white stone to which sindur has been applied, covered by hair wrapped round it, and another kind of bonga is all kinds of agricultural seeds and a white stone with sindur applied to it, put into an empty cocoon. When the bonga has been dug out, the diseased persons sometimes get well, sometimes they also get worse thereby. When they dig out bongas, sacrifices have to be given, one ram, one pig, one goat, five fowls and one pair of pigeons. The ojha gets for the offering of his blood five four-anna bits in money, and when the diseased person gets quite well, the ojha at the same time next year gets five rupees and a loin-cloth.

i. The bonga of the old home of a wife.

If the bonga of the old home of a wife follows her, they will get well only when he is 755
taken back there; otherwise they are taken ill and they die. If they sacrifice every year to 776
a bonga of the wife's old home, who has followed to the son-in-law's home, he will not eat them; if they do not sacrifice to him, they will have to give various things to make him go back. As much as they have brought from the house of the bride's father, only when they send all this back, will the bonga of the wife's old home leave them, and they will also have to take along to the home of the bride's father two animals to be sacrificed. They call the bonga of a wife's old home acraele bonga. If the bongas of the wife's old home become angry, they eat awfully; therefore people make sacrifices to them from fear; or they send them quickly back.

j. About exorcising bongas.

When bongas are exorcised, a good many requisites in connexion therewith have to be given, otherwise they do not go out. They exorcize the wealth-bongas. The wealth-bongas make them who have taken them in, very wealthy; but if they become obstinately angry, they eat people in large numbers. Therefore people are saved only when they exorcize them; otherwise they will eradicate the whole family.

If they get proofs through ojhas or witchfinders, that the wealth-bongas are eating, they procure the requisites: one silk cloth, one small box with sindur, a hair-knot tassel, a plait of cow-tail hair, a hair-pin, a small box with eye-paint, a winnowing-fan, a small

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755 flat basket, an iron stick, five chains, five nails, a pair of sandals, a wooden slab to sit on,
776 a small cart, a bundle with grains of all crops, five rupees, two cows, one pig, one goat, a ram and five fowls. On the ram they put a small bell. When they have gathered all this, they bring the ojha.

The ojha then calls on the bonga to come. He makes the bonga take possession of a man. The ojha puts a worn-out winnowing-fan in front of the person to be possessed; in this winnowing-fan he puts about one handful of sun-dried rice; then he says: Come here, Lord, come to such and such a house, thou so and so bonga, I am calling on thee, crying to thee, in hurry and haste come running, come quickly, as a disciple, as a medium he is sitting, he is seated (the one to be possessed). Now the man quickly becomes possessed. Then they ask him: Please then, Lord, thy owner has come to an end worshipping thee, adoring thee; listen, he will not keep thee any more; what do you say? Then the bonga quickly mutters that it is right; and he says: If he will not keep me, I shall go; let him deliver up to me all that is mine.

Thereupon they bring out to him all the collected requisites. They say to him: Look, here is all that is yours; well then, are you satisfied or not? He says: Satisfied. Now he enters the cowshed to select cows for himself. He slaps two and comes away. He comes out, and they ask him: How is it, have you got everything? He says to them: Yes, I have. Thereupon they open the gate, and the two cows that he has chosen, come out of their own accord. They bind them with ropes. Thereupon they take all the collected requisites and say to him: Come along, where you have your place and abode, guide us there. Then he comes to.

Now the two cows of their own accord go in front, and these two guide the people along. The winnowing-fan the ojha takes along, carrying it in his armpit. Where the two cows stop and lie down, there they behead the sacrificial animals. Through the head of the ram they put a chain, and they hammer this fast to a tree. The flesh of the sacrificed animals they all of them cook into a hash with rice, and they all eat it there, before they go away. And the things they leave there; none will touch these; if they touch them, the wealth-bonga will follow after them. And the man from whom the bonga was exorcised, will, before a year is passed, become utterly poor; his cows and buffaloes will also all die; his paddy and rice will also be blown away, who knows where; the inhabitants of this house become utter paupers. This is what we have seen with our eyes. Unrighteous wealth will not stay.

k. Spiriting away by bongas.

776 We are very much afraid of bongas spiriting away; they spirit away people, and things also they cause to disappear. The bongas, who spirit away, are female bongas. They spirit away young Santal men. Some live in water, and some in mountain caves. It is told they

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like young Santal men very much; therefore they spirit them away to themselves, that they may be married to them. In the shape of Santal girls they beguile them and take them in. Down in the water, it is told, they have what is like kingly palaces, and in the mountain caves also the same. They give them excellent rice and curry, it is told; if young men spirited away bring these things out in the world, it at once becomes earth. Formerly, people tell, young Santal men had got children with bonga girls. One bonga girl once ran in to a young Santal man. They lived together for a long time and got children. When she had run in, the bonga girl said to the young man: When we may become angry for some cause and quarrel or scold each other, you may beat me with anything, but do not kick me with your foot. When she had become the mother of two or three children, the young man was one day milking a cow; at that time the bonga girl was in the door leading into the cowshed, giving breast to her child. Somehow or other she was making the child cry; getting angry at this the young man suddenly kicked her. Then the bonga girl became deadly hurt. She cried awfully. That very day she went out and away. The young man tried again and again to bring her back, but was unable to make her come back. When bonga girls, it is told, have been married to Santal men, they do all kinds of work, only they do not throw cow-dung away, and they do not eat rice and curry with salt; if they eat salt, they will disappear. Many young men who were spirited away by bonga girls, have come back, both from the water and from the mountain caves. At the present day also some such ones are living. The bonga girls, it is told, have the heels turned forwards and the instep backwards.

l. About bongas appearing.

We have also seen bongas revealing themselves. They look like real; but as you continue looking at them, they disappear to sight these bongas. Formerly the bongas appeared in visions to the righteous witchfinders and told them what they had to say. The bongas who reveal themselves cannot be caught like other bongas. They speak, that is so. If the people of the country or the people of any village have done anything wrong, the bongas reveal themselves and tell them, as they leave: You have done this or that wrong; now observe religious abstinence and do so and so; otherwise it will go bad with you.

m. About goblins and ghosts.

There are also goblins and ghosts. Women who die during pregnancy become goblins (*curin*), and children who die in the womb, become ghosts (*bhut*), people tell. Children who die without having been ceremonionaly cleansed also become ghosts. The head of the goblins, it is told, looks like a spinning wheel, standing out, and the ghosts are very small, indistinctly seen. The goblins suck people, when they find them alone, and the ghosts frighten people in a thousand shapes.

3; Skreferud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

XIII. ADDITIONAL ACCOUNT BY OLD JUGIA

Because of the harassing of the Dekos and the distress through lack of food after we had crossed the Ajee river, we were, as time passed, spread about towards the North and the East, on the hills in the North East right up to the Ganges river. At that time there was only forest, and here and there Bhûiyas[1] and on the hill tops Mar Muṇḍas[2]. The Muṇḍas they also call Mâurias. The Bhûiyas and the Mar Muṇḍas were the landowners at that time. They allowed us to take up land in peace, and they took a very small amount of rent from us. Under them we had no distress at all. But as time passed, the Dekos entered trading, and finally they settled down as money-lenders. They also became the money-lenders of the landlords. The landlords borrowed money and clothes from them and gave the country to them as security. In this way the Deko money-lenders got the country from them by fraud, they themselves became the landlords, and the real landlords became paupers and became like us. The Deko landlords living at the foot of the hill country also took possession of what belonged to the Mar.

We cleared the hill country and the forest country at our expense for the new landlords, after they had become money-lenders, and they gradually increased the land-rent for us. The money-lenders give us very small amounts, and they take very much. The crops of the year they take away from us, all of it, and we get through life by again incurring debts with them. However much we pay back, still it is not cleared off. If they are not satisfied with the crops of the year, they drive our cattle away; and if they are not content even by this, they make us, wife and children, serve with them as slaves for a couple of half-seers (of rice). At that time there were no magistrates; to whom could we complain? Afterwards Deko police came in; but these dismiss our cases, taking the white pice of their own race. We had very great distress. With the whole country we became bewildered.

Then different rumours arose. First this: The two Lag Lagin[3] snakes are coming; they will swallow people. To remove the adverse influence men of five villages gathered and walked about to five other villages, during one night, being religiously very abstinent. To our village those of five villages came, one man to every separate house. In the village

[1] A semi-Hinduised caste, living here and there near the Santals in the southern parts of the Santal Parganas.

[2] A Dravidian tribe living on the hills

[3] Lag Lagin, a Bengalised form of Nag Nagin, a pair of fabulous snakes.

173 167 648 173 668 [776]

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their enemies, the Santals built many forts at Campa. The one named Khàiri gaṛ belonged to the Hèmbròm clan. Koeṇḍa gaṛ fort was meant for the Kiskus. The fourth fortress, named Badoli gaṛ, sheltered the Màrṇḍis, while Sim gaṛ was occupied by the Ṭuḍus.

The early Santals lived at Campa for many generations. They became a great people there, and were independent of others' control. Their kings belonged to the Kisku clan. The Murmus were the priests. They were called Murmu Ṭhàkur. The Sòrèn clan supplied the warriors. Their profession was fighting only. Hembròms were "Kunàr" (the nobility, according to well-informed opinion). The clan known as the Màrṇḍis were rich men. They were the money-lenders. The Ṭuḍus worked as the musicians and smiths of the tribe, while the Baskes were the traders. The duties of the other clans are now forgotten.

The sojourn of the Santals at Campa is important for the fact that here they began to worship the various tribal deities. We hear that they built shrines in sacred groves situated at the end of the village "kulhi" (lanes) and began to worship Maraṇ Buru (*big-mountain*, the chief presiding deity), Mòṇṛènko (*fives*) and Jahèr era (*old-woman*). Siñ-Boṅga (*the sun-god*) was worshipped every fifth year at sun-rise.

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114 similar to the tradition as narrated by us, and takes
174 the reader through the Santal sojourn at Hihiri Pipiri, Sasan beda, Khòj kaman, Hara or Harata and Jàrpi. But what is most important in the version is that the author has sought to identify, with query marks of course, the mythical seats with modern geographical names. Thus he seems to think that Aere may be Iran, Kaeṇḍe may be Kandahar, Cac might refer to the Chinic Tartary and the fabled Campa of Santal myth, the land of seven rivers with Sapta Sind, the present Punjab, where the early Santals dwelt for long, and where their institutions took rise, and lastly Sikhàr to be the modern Hazaribagh district. The other point to note is that this account mentions some rivers among which are the Maha nàni, Sinjo nàni, Giru nàni, the Sura nàni and the Gua nàni by whose side the immigrants successively lived.

We should mention here that the foregoing traditional story tallied in essential particulars with that told by the Santals of Mayurbhanj during our investigations there and we have noted the minor differences in the foot-notes.

184 It is, however, very interesting to note the major
• 776 variations with the traditions as noted by "Horkoren Mare Hapramko Reak' Katha" from that obtaining in Mayurbhanj. In the first place, all the members of a conference of the old Santals insisted on

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calling "Ṭhàkur Jiu' as "Dhòròm". Nabin Mañjhi, Headman of Chamardahani, Muruda, explained that Dhòròm is the Creator of the world according to Santal belief. Being asked if the deity is worshipped at present by the Santals, he replied that Dhòròm is invoked during all marriage ceremonies with offerings of pure water and nothing else. Closely questioned as to whether the god had any shape or form, he answered that he had none and was 'nirakar' (*formless*). Secondly, the Santals of Muruda led by Nabin Mañjhi gave us some additional information as to how the first parents prepared the first drink. This was what they did. Gòṛòm baba asked them to grind grass-seeds and later directed them to bring the water from a fountain called *tatijhari*, by drinking which the monkeys became drunk as it washed the roots of a plant named *ràmu ran*.[1] [A plant of the name exists in Mayurbhanj and is extensively used in the preparation of hàṇḍia (*rice-beer*)]. Then these two substances were mixed together to make the drink of the first parents. Thirdly, we have seen in the foregoing account that the Santals, while at Hihiri Pipiṛi were divided into seven clans and it is only after their migration from Sasan beda that they

1. Ràmu—The ferment used in the manufacture of rice-beer, Ran—drug (Dr. Campbell).

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smile, "O, there are the "Bongas" (*evil-spirits, deities*)." Thus finishes the daily routine of their lives.

The annual round of their life is a string of agricultural activities, working as day-labourers when there is no work to do at home, tribal feasts at the Holy-grove of the village or at the house of the Headman or other villagers, ceremonial hunts as during the "Baha" (*Flower-festival*), dances enmasse during the tribal festivities or at moon-lit nights and fish-gathering on a quest of joy and food combined.

And in between, if there is any leisure time they spend it in gathering fruit, making nets and in occasional hunts to the neighbouring forests and indulge in the delights of the chase of their primitive semi-hunting life.

Santal Cottages

Typical Santal cottages almost invariably stand on both sides of a straggling "kulhi," (*village lane*) where pigs squeal and fowls flutter about.

Each cottage is a two or three-roomed affair. On the floor corn is strewn for being aired. The plinth made of mud, rises one to three cubits high, the average being a cubit and half. It is beautifully blackened with a dye made of burnt straw plastered with cow-dung. The walls of the houses are made of bamboos or "sal" logs and are generally plastered

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342 it was told, to the depredations of evil-spirits. And
556 even brick-built houses like those of the rich land-
177 owners of Orissa caught our attention at Tikari-
para, Mayurbhanj, with surrounding walls of brick that one cannot usually associate with Santal life,[1] except in their absence of windows.

342 Windows Santals will never have. "O, the
776 Boṅgas," will again be the answer if you question them on the point. The Santal dog, who snarls at
[231] the chance passer-by, and is treated and fed like a member of the family, keeps an all-night vigil. If
[574] you call for a Santal at mid-night, it may be he may greet you with an arrow, for he thinks that "Boṅgas" take human shapes and lure away men and women.

353 Santal walls are the beauty-spots of the hamlet. Here the inner artistic craving of the primitive tribe has displayed itself in a realm of phantasy. In some places, we saw the walls painted with a variety of colours, white, yellow, black, red and chocolate; sometimes with one colour and sometimes with alternate stripes, again with queer patches of triangles and rectangles. (See illustrations). Various pictures, associated with Santal life. sometimes greet your eyes. Here is a Brobdingnagian deity aiming a shaft at a

1 This was the house of Chandramohan Murmu of Tikaripara, Bamanghati, Mayurbhanj. Its dimensions were measured to be 50 by 20 cubits.

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614 cleverly enough. The two clans were already in
578 terms of enmity, so naturally enough, the Kiskus suspected the Màrṇḍis to be the thieves, and wanted to fight with them. A certain date was fixed for this trial of strength and the venue was to be a jungle.

The Màrṇḍis, finding it difficult to fight against a multitude of Kiskus began to cut all the trees at the height of three and a half cubic feet. Next, they tied turbans of different colours on to the trunks so lopped off, so as to look like soldiers. However, this funny plan proved successful on the day of the fight. The Màrṇḍis arrived early and when the Kiskus followed, consternation ran through their hosts at the sight of the overwhelming numbers of their enemies, and they ran helter skelter, for their lives. From that day Màrṇḍis have enmity with the Kiskus. They do not even marry Kisku girls.

614 The Màrṇḍi bride for whom the fighting
[776] took place died soon. After her death, she became a goddess in their sub-clan. She is worshipped along with other gods and goddesses of Màrṇḍis. She is worshipped with a *herak' kalòt* (*a brown pullet*. The meat is eaten by all including women too.) One day, when such a ceremony was going on, the "herak' kalòt" (*a brown pullet*) which they offered was found to be a small one, and the meat of the hen was quite insufficient, for the Màrṇḍi

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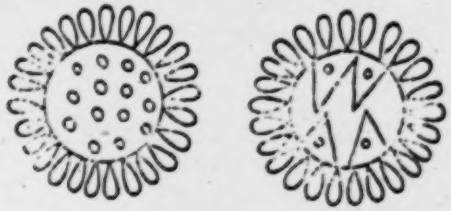
floral embroidery on the skin. This presumably refers to the Santal Supreme Deity, *Siñ Boṅga* (Sun-God).

These marks are usually applied to Santal girls between their tenth and eleventh year before their marriage ; cases of post-marriage tattooing also were mentioned by some. Custom requires that the ceremony of tattooing should be performed outside the house by a woman of the *Siklidar* tribe. Such a professional woman is called *Khudni* (she who punctures) in Mayurbhanj. She uses a three-pronged iron weapon to pierce the flesh and imprint the designs, and applies the juice of myrobalan as the dyeing stuff. Finally, the portion thus marked and dyed is washed with turmeric-paste diluted in water.



Tattoo marks on women.

In answer to our questions as to why they wear such marks, several women said, "These are our marks to be shown before *Bhògban* (God). What else will remain hereafter ?, (excepting these marks)". Nabin Mañjhi, an old Santal Headman explained

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elders. The men-folk are shaved and, thereafter, both men and women repair to the *jòl-ghat* (public bath). Coming back, two men again impersonate *Maraṅ Burn* and the deceased, and are offered *bàṇḍiaràsi* (the best part of rice-beer); fowls and goats are sacrificed in their honour in the yard. A meal is prepared with rice and offered inside the house, while the villagers are plied with rice-beer and treated to a feast. The meat of the sacrificed animal is divided in a peculiar way, the villagers being entitled to the upper side when it was felled on the ground, the lower falling to the share of him who provided it.

The ceremonies conclude at Mayurbhanj with *Kandh Bhojani*, when some Santals, impersonating Brahmins and Vaishnavs, are fed by the family, and *Bhandar Bodh*, which requires a barber, similarly acting his part, to be presented with rice and meat showing undoubted influences of Hinduism.

IDEAS OF HEAVEN AND HELL

At this stage, we think it will be instructive to give the reader some idea about the Santal's belief in a life hereafter.

The Heaven (*Serma disom*, lit. sky-country) is situated up in the blue skies. It is also called *Svòṛòg*. There the gods, *Maraṅ Burn* (the Chief Presiding Deity) and others live. At times they also

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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come down to earth. When after a man's death, his *jaṅ baba* (bones) are thrown into the sacred river, Damodar, his *mul* (shadow, soul) goes up to *Serma disom* or *Svòrȍg* (Heaven). There it is that the virtuous ones remain, enjoying heavenly bliss along with the gods themselves.

Those who were sinners on the earth, are consigned to *Nòrȍk* (Hell). It is a very painful place where big worms feed perpetually on those thus punished, and a variety of other tortures are also provided (e. g. they may be ordered to unweave the knots of a net). *Nòrȍk* (Hell) is the abode of *Jòm Raja* (King of Death), who takes away the sinners from the earth and imprisons them there. The men and women, who go there, without their cicatrization and tattoo-marks respectively, are made to sit with their hands outspread, and they are then made to embrace (*bòbòr*) huge drum-sized worms, by the regents of the nether-world. When these worms move, the prisoners undergo painful torture.

As regards the period of such punishment and re-birth on earth for those who are consigned to Hell, some believe that they are born again as beasts and birds on the earth. But if their sin is washed away completely, they can have re-birth as men. Others are disposed to believe that the sinners never come back to earth as men, but only as birds and beasts.

3: Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
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796 will their women wear them in their hair. As distinguished from the *Sobrae*, the Harvest Home, which is a trifle Bacchanalian, this festival is purer in its observances.

796 783 778 The festival begins with a day of purification called *Um*, when the young men of the village assemble at the *Jahèrthan*, (the Holy-Grove) in the village, and build two huts. One of these huts is [796] reserved for the Santal deity, called Gosane era, the other is meant to be jointly shared by Jahèr era, the presiding deity of the grove, "Monṛènko", (the "Five", meaning the five presiding gods) and Maraṅ Buru, the chief presiding deity. The shrines thus built are then purified with cow-dung by the priest. All the young men of the village then bathe and purify themselves.

796 [793] [783] In the meantime, the *Naeke* (priest) cleanses a winnowing fan, a basket, a bow and arrow, a pick-axe, a broom-stick, a holy gong and a hunting-horn and daub them with oil and *mithi* (a kind of spice).

[624] The evening comes. In the meantime, the *Godet*, the orderly of the village Headman, has presented him (the priest) with three fowls. Three [787] young men now advance towards the priest's house, shaking their heads in a trance and impersonating Jahèr era, Maraṅ Buru and Gosane era respectively. Jahèr era then enters the priest's hut, puts on the bracelet, and putting the basket on his head, takes

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CHAPTER IX

RELIGION OF THE SANTALS

Santal Deities and Spirits

In course of the previous chapters, we have come across the names of various deities and spirits that the Santals propitiate during their festivals or at their private worships. We intend now to take them one by one so that we may discuss about their nature. 776 • [128]

Supreme Deity (Thàkur Jiu, Siñ Boṅga or Dhòròm)

While discussing the Santal theory of Creation, we have already familiarised the reader with Thàkur Jiu, who created this world. This religion of a faineant supreme deity struck Rev. Skrefsrud and other ethnographers, as being a theological conception behind their spiritual ideas. We have already hinted that we questioned the Santals of Mayurbhanj closely on the point. There were some who were ready to identify him with God, the only one and no second, but hundreds of Santals remained dumb-founded when asked to say if their "Dhòròm" is shapeless. As one goes deeper, one finds oneself in a bog. The educated Santals, living under Hindu influence, will readily identify their Supreme 776 177

3s Mukherjea O. Y-4, 8 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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776 [179] Deity with the Hindu idea in the Upanishads, whereas the Christian Santals will attribute to him Biblical ideas. One thing however is clear. The Santal does not yet bother very much about the Supreme Deity, as he is too good to interfere with men, and is a passive deity after all. There are others, who identify Ṭhàkur Jiu of the traditions with Siñ Boñga, the Sun-god, worshipped every tenth year by the Santals; but the concept of Supreme Deity can only, with difficulty, be associated with him.

[114] Risley doubts whether a Hindu name "Ṭhàkur" can form a part of the original system of Santals, and his exercise of supreme powers leads him (Risley) to associate the deity with a later stage of theological development. But when everything is said, the fact remains that the Santal of the modern times is not a fetish-worshipper and whether his present belief is borrowed from Hinduism or not, it cannot be dogmatically asserted any more that the Santal has no God, the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer in his pantheon.

Village Spirits

The Santals have several village spirits, whom they worship during all public festivals. They are supposed to preside over particular rural areas in which they live.

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The chief presiding deity of the Santals is "Maraṅ Buru." ('Maraṅ' means great, and 'Buru,' hill). Literally, he is the Great Mountain of the Santal traditions, noted in the first chapter. It is said that he possesses the widest possible powers and is associated both with good and mischievous godlings. He must be offered a white fowl, and if a goat is offered, it too must be white and uncastrated. He should be propitiated with a liberal offer of rice-beer during all Santal festivals, and birth, death and marriage ceremonies in the tribe.

Another village-deity is "Mòntènko Turuiko" (Lit. the five-six), who is now a single entity, but addressed in the plural (the suffix *ko* indicates plurality). The Santals believe that they were five brothers (Mòntèn = five) who were wedded to six sisters named Dangi, Pungi, Hisi, Dumni, Chita and Kapra, (Turui = six). They are supposed to preside over the welfare of the village. His younger sister, "Gosane era," constitutes a separate deity of the *Jabèrthan* (Holy Grove), and is offered worship in a different hut. "Jahèr era," another sister of "Mòntènko" is the goddess of *Jabèrthan* (Holy Grove) named after her. She has a stone assigned as her symbol. The Santals woship her for the general welfare of the village, so that their children may have good health, crops may grow in plenty and youths and maids of the tribe may be

3: Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
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776 married quickly. For propitiation, she needs a
[782] brown hen (*Herak' Sim*); and if a goat is sacrificed in her honour, it must be a red she-goat.

776 In course of our investigations at Mayurbhanj,
778 we were shown stones in the *Jahèrthan* (Holy Grove)
346 which were supposed to represent these deities. During all public festivals, huts are raised to worship them suitably. It was stated that in Mayurbhanj three huts are raised ; one to house "Jahèr era," "Maraṅ Buru" and "Mòn*r*è*n*ko," a second for "Gosa*n*e era," and the third for another village deity, "Mañjhi Haṛam." But there are instances when a fourth one is insisted on by younger folk, to honour the younger brother of Mañjhi, called "Hudiñ Mañjhi Haṛam." In our references to the
[184] practice in the Santal Parganas (e.g. *Baha*, Santal Sal-blossom festival) we have seen that only "Jahèr era," "Gosa*n*e era," "Maraṅ Buru," and "Mòn*r*è*n*ko" have huts for them in the Holy Grove. Mañjhi has his place no doubt, but he is worshipped at the *Mañjhithan*, a separate shrine in the village.

776 As a matter of fact Mañjhi Boṅga may be
[775] supposed to represent the spirits of dead Mañjhis (village Headman). But he is only second to another dignitary, "Pargana," who has power over witches.
[184] Both of these are village-deities, although they may not find a place in the *Jahèrthans* of Mayurbhanj Santals.

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Hill Spirits

Apart from the village-spirits mentioned before, the Santals people their hills with numerous super-human agencies, called *Pats*. These powers inspire them with a fear and naturally, they are propitiated so that they may not do the Santals any harm.

The enquirer into *pat* spirits comes across a host of names dotting the whole country-side, all deriving their names from the hills, big or small, they are supposed to reside in.

Rup Narain Mañjhi (Baske) of Pokhuridiha, Mayurbhanj, stated that the Santals in his locality worship the following hill-spirits:—

1. Berha Pat—He is the chief hill-spirit. He is worshipped for success in hunting and for protecting the Santals from harms incidental thereto; and secondly, for protecting people when undertaking any journey. The deity delights in receiving red fowls and uncastrated he-goats as sacrificial offerings.

2. Mangar Pat—This deity is worshipped for reasons similar to those stated before. There were times when this god received human sacrifices.

3. Budha Pahar—A male deity. He is worshipped for help towards successful journeys. He receives a cock of any colour and an uncastrated goat for propitiation.

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4. Pauri Pat – A female deity. She is invoked for success in journeys. Previously human sacrifices were offered to her, but now she receives fowls and uncastrated goats as offerings.

[115] Surendra Mañjhi of village Chandua, Mayurbhanj, stated that in their locality, they have the following *Pat* spirits:—

1. Chandra Pat—Worshipped if there is no rain, with offerings of sweets, bananas, hens of any colour and uncastrated goats.

2. Duarsani Pat – Same as before.

He added that all these Pat spirits are also called *Thakran* in Mayurbhanj.

Amongst other *Pats*, lying distributed throughout Mayurbhanj, mention was made of "*Dagarsila*" who is invoked during warfare. He is propitiated by a red cock and an uncastrated goat. Mention should also be made of *Sula Pat*, whose aid is sought during litigation, epidemics amongst men or cattle or during droughts. This deity has no special liking of any colour of the fowls or goats to be sacrificed in his honour. Next comes *Buru Boṅga*, the horrible deity who delights in human blood. Although human sacrifice is now a rare phenomenon even to be stealthily indulged in, blood-curdling traditions linger of human victims being decoyed and sacrificed by the Santals out to wreak private

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vengeance, or to gain riches. A very similar deity, requiring to be propitiated by human blood, was mentioned by Rupnarain Mañjhi of Mayurbhanj. She is a female spirit called *Ròñkini*, residing on a hill called Panapachet in Singbhum, where in the past, she was offered human sacrifices.

The men who are employed to decoy human victims (may be of any sex or age) are called *Oṇḍga*. And such is the fear of a Santal about these *oṇḍgas*, that they sometimes mistake any stranger loitering in the country-side as such kidnappers; and instances are on record in the Santal Parganas of such innocent men being stoned to death by infuriated Santals.

A recorded case of human sacrifice to such deities can be seen in Mayurbhanj Law Reports (Bhima Naik vs. Mayurbhanj State, 1934-35) which refers to a case wherein certain Santals and Kols were tried on a charge of murdering a lad, "unique in the annals of crime in Mayurbhanj" as C. J. Dr. P. K. Sen, characterised it. The facts were these:—

One Bhima Mañjhi of Kalajhori, Bamanghati (Mayurbhanj), was supposed to have left a buried treasure. His son, Laso had a *jhupar* (sooth-sayer working himself under an ecstatic trance, in which he is inspired by oracular powers) with the aid of an exorcist; and a particular place was located, but nothing was really found.

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776 782 nothing was really found. One Mangla Mañjhi heard about it and it "roused his curiosity and cupidity." He now requisitioned the services of Bhima Naik, a famous exorcist, who decided upon human sacrifice to propitiate the deity guarding the treasure. Next, a lad named Chotrai was decoyed, his head severed, and the blood held in a small earthen pot and offered to the deity.

Basuki or Basumata

Apart from the hill and village spirits mentioned above, the Santals worship *Basuki* or *Basumata* for the welfare of agriculture, during the month of Ashar, with offerings of fowls and goats. Such [731] worships do not form a regular feature of the tribal calendar, but are occasional invocations during apprehended crop-failure.

Ancestor Spirits

769 761 If the idea of death has profoundly puzzled humanity, the Santals are no exception to the rule. In their crude way, they have built up a theory regarding the disembodied spirits which regards the dead ancestors with religious awe and reverence.

769 Thus it is that we see that in all festivals, public or private, *Haṛamko* or *Buṛha-Buṛhi* (the old man

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and woman) are offered a cock and a hen respectively, together with a liberal share of rice-beer. During harvest festivals, like *Sohrae* or the Flower Festival (*Baha*), fowls are sacrificed in their honour with prayers so that the members of the tribe may have no diseases such as bowel-complaints. The reverence paid to the memory of the dead relatives by the Santals will also be amply illustrated by the fact that the departed spirits of the dead brothers and unmarried sisters receive supplementary worship, after the propitiation of *Burha-Burbi*.

Mischievous Spirits

Santals have about a number of mischievous minor spirits, who find a devilish delight in bringing epidemics to men or cattle, unless propitiated with appropriate rituals.

We came across three such representatives in the Santal pantheon, *Kalachandi*, a male spirit, and *Kalamahichandi* and *Nasòn-kudra*, both female evil spirits, as exercising an uncanny influence on the tribe. The offerings that please them are *Ihitipiti* (Oriya, a kind of worm), frogs, grass-hoppers, fowls, human blood, vermilion, sun-dried rice, powdered charcoal and burnt clay from ovens. It is noteworthy that earthen images are made to represent these deities. They are at first invoked in the

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household, and thereafter, at the junction of two roads. Human blood can only be offered at the latter place.

Amongst lesser Boṅgas under this head, mention should be made of Acraeli Boṅga (or Jodhe Boṅga as in Mayurbhanj), who presides over the interests of married women. We were told that if a woman steals anything from her parents' home, and takes it to her husband's place, this godling maintains a close watch over the stolen properties and punishes the household by bringing illness and even death. The tenacity of this deity is almost leech-like, and to make him return to his own domain involves costly offerings.

The *Bagbat Boṅga* or tiger spirit is worshipped during the annual winter Harvest Home at Mayurbhanj, in order that tigers may not kill the cattle of the Santals. During the hypnotic trance (*Jhupar*) that precedes the sacrifice to the deity, the person possessed does not cut off the head of the fowl with a knife, but springs tiger-like on the fowl and tears it off with his teeth.

Some Boṅgas of this description take the form of young men and women for the purpose of meeting with Santals of the opposite sex. The result of such unions invariably lead to illness; and the attentions of the Boṅga-lovers can be prevented by elaborate magic and charms by Witch Doctors.

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Household Deity (Oṛak' Boṅga) and Secret God (Abge Boṅga)

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It is the custom with the Santals not to disclose the names of the Oṛak' Boṅgas or Abge Boṅgas presiding over the family to any one but the eldest son. They are particularly careful to guard the names as a close secret even from their wives, for fear, that they might obtain sinister influence over these deities, turn into witches and eat up the members of the family.[1] We gathered at Mayurbhanj that the Oṛak' Boṅgas are invoked for the welfare of the household during the winter Harvest Home, Flower Festival and the sowing festivals with offerings of goats, fowls and pigs. The Abge Boṅgas are worshipped near white-ant hills with offerings of rams, fowls and pigs. It is remarkable that the whole family can partake of the sacrificial offerings to Oṛak' Boṅgas, but it is reserved for

1 The following names were procured from Christian Santals by Mr. Skrefsrud:—

Oṛak' Boṅga:—(1) Baspahar. (2) Deswali. (3) Sas. (4) Goraya. (5) Sarchawdi. (6) Thuntatursa.

Abge Boṅga:—(1) Dharamsore or Dharasanda. (2) Ketkomkudra. (3) Champa-Denagar. (4) Garhsinka. (5) Lilachandi. (6) Dhanghara. (7) Kudrachandi. (8) Bahara. (9) Duarseri. (10) Kudraj. (11) Gosainera. (?) (12) Achali. (13) Deswali.

3: Mukherjea O, Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
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776 782 men alone to taste those presented before the Abge Boñgas.

793 *Selection of Village Priest*

We consider it appropriate at this stage to give the readers some idea as to how the priest, the human connecting link between the tribe and the 793 gods, is selected. When the priest dies childless or 623 resigns voluntarily, village elders assemble at the 622 house of the Headman or the priest. Next, the six deities of holy grove are invoked by the men sitting on mats, each with a winnowing-fan and some sun-dried rice given by the priest, if he is resigning, or by the Headman, if the priest is dead. [787] As usual some begin to shake their heads in a hypnotic trance and get possessed. These men in trance are asked as to who they are. They name themselves after the gods they stand for. Thereafter, they are questioned as to whom they are recommending for the post. They answer. But it is customary that Marañ Buru will first propose a name, and the other actor-deities invariably second and support him.

793 We have said before that the priest gets rent-[423] free lands, out of whose proceeds he can buy [425] sacrificial fowls and other requirements of office. [689] Should he commit any social wrong, he can be [623] removed from office by the tribal assembly.

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771 769 worship of the *Pitris*. That is a religion not of undiluted fear in the presence of the mysterious powers of the dark.

771 [776] The very name of the Supreme Deity connotes a moral order of things. In ancestor-worship, in endearing terms of primary human-relationships as "Basumata," we find something that removes the Santals steps higher than the animists. That emotion and thrill play a conspicuous part in the religious practices of the Santals, cannot for a moment be doubted by the person who has observed them with an eye to see. It may be that they [779] have borrowed these from the Hindus. But even as Pre-Dravidian practices have been digested and assimilated beyond recognition by the Hindus, these ideas, even if borrowed, have been for a long time past, the religious life and blood of the tribe.

So it is that the latest Census reports have given up the term 'Animism' in describing the religion of the Santals, and for want of a better expression we should characterise it as "Spiritism" a term used by Rai Bahadur S. C. Roy, in designating the religion of the Kharias, a Munḍa tribe.

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CHAPTER X

MAGIC AND WITCH-CRAFT

In course of the previous chapter, we have given the reader some idea as to how the Santal mind reacts in the presence of the mysteries of life. We have seen that they have elaborate rituals to propitiate the deities, with whom they people this world. In the present chapter, we shall see how they deal with the super-normal phenomena. That "there are more things in heaven and earth" than is dreamt of in one's philosophy is the conclusion of puzzled humanity at large, and the Santals have their own special methods of dealing with them by magical practices.

To Remove Drought

When there is a drought, and the agricultural well-being of the tribe is thus threatened, several Santal villages combine together and subscribe funds for the propitiation of *Sima Bongas* (the boundary deities). Some men fall in a trance. These men, inspired with oracular powers, are requested to state reasons for the calamity that has befallen the tribe and to suggest remedies. Generally, the tribal troubles are hinted by those who impersonate the invisible gods, and solemn assurances are held out

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that special offerings would be offered when rain falls. And when rains come on, the village-priest propitiates the boundary-deities with the promised rituals and sacrifices.

To Remove Village Illness

When epidemics break out in the tribe, the village deities *Gram pat*, *Bisam Thakurani* (Hindu goddess, *Kali*), together with all the gods of the Holy Grove are invoked by the priest at the head of the tribe. The preliminary procedure of the worship is the same as noted above in connection with removal of droughts with the addition that the witches responsible for the calamity may be mentioned by the men in trance supposed to speak for the deity.

When any member of a Santal household falls ill, the head of the house arranges for an invocation to the *Orak' Boṅga* (household deity). As a preliminary to the worship of the deity, some men fall in a hypnotic stupor, in which they are supposed to have oracular powers. Thereupon, the householder asks the man in trance:—

Dè tabe gosane òkòe boṅga, òkòe buru, heken seteren, jaotya janama lie odong, tabe gosane pataganda sira ganda bil akan ate akan gosane.

Translation:—

"O thou deity! What god art thou? What

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754 they assemble in a forest or field, all travelling on trees which are their vehicles by night. Here, [776] naked except for the bristles of a broom-stick, they sing and dance for the whole night with *Boṅgas* (spirit deities) and lions as their partners. It is said that they like very much to pat the manes of the lions and comb them. And they beguile the *Boṅgas* so that they may not help the Witch-doctors to know their real names. They then return before morning to their respective homes and take up human shapes.

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A Witch Tradition

To illustrate the theory of witches two very réalistic stories are told in the *Hóṛkorèn Mare Hapṛamko Reak' Katha*. One of them states that in olden times, the witches of a certain place used to secure the services of two Santal lads to play on kettle-drums during their nocturnal revelries. Once, they took out the lungs of another young man and had a picnic after cooking them with rice, salt and turmeric. The young men were not denied their share, but they stealthily pocketed their portion of the monstrous dish, while the party was carousing in drinks of home-made beer, *bàṇḍia*. When, however, they returned home the next morning, they found that the victim out of whom the lungs were taken out, had fallen seriously ill. People

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men passing under their names had learnt the art. 754
They furiously denied that they had come overnight 539
and were the more perplexed to see their special signatures on *sal*-leaves. "The marks are ours but they are forged," they protested..... All could easily guess who had tricked them thus. Marañ Burn in his anger said, "The women cheated me too as if I were a child. Put your own marks, I shall see these women."..... Then the deity taught them the craft [756]
of the Witch-doctor as a counteracting factor to the Witch-craft learnt by women.

So it is, the early fathers of the Santals say, 754
that there has been going on a ceaseless war between 756
the Witches and the Witch-doctors known as *Ojhas* 791
and *Jan gurus*. But in the tussle, the exorcists are [776]
frequently worsted because the witches ally themselves with the *Boñgas* (evil-spirits) by bribing them with all the sweets of life. It is no wonder therefore that wrong persons are sometimes mentioned in the Witch-doctor's "Tel-pat" (*a sal*-leaf, moistened with oil), where the real self of the Witch ought to be reflected, and innocent persons are named therein by the witches in collusion with the evil-spirits.

The Santal traditions say that Witch-craft and [173]
the cult of the Witch-doctor are attributed by some to 'Kamru-Guru' i.e. people versed in the arts at Kamrup, whose disciples the early Santals became.

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Ojha will take the fowl through his legs with a swinging movement of his body thrice round the bed of the patient. After this, he will require a wick with oil and on it he pours some incense and as he goes round the patient, he does the same. Next, the *Ojha* takes the fowls and offers them to the god of the disease and to the presiding deity of the *Ojha* himself. All these he will do outside the village. Next, after taking the sacrificed fowls, the *Ojha* will go home."

Thus the *Ojha* (Witch-doctor) is a person who has the power of *mantras* to waste away the evil-influences applied to men or women by *Ḍàns* or *Nañjòms*. To be perfect in his craft, he has sometimes to be in league with the witches. There is another class of men called "Sakha" in Mayurbhanj, who serve as sorcerers. They can test fortune by lots and can indicate who is a witch and has brought illness in a person or animal.

The orthodox witch-finder is called "Jan-Guru". There are two methods of training in the art. The first method requires the pupil eager for such a training, to place himself under a "Jan-Guru" as a *chela* (pupil). Then the *Guru* tells him the names of the *Boṅgas*, the process of worship and how to exercise the power of a "Jan-Guru." The pupil practises the lessons for some days, and when the *Boṅgas* are pleased, he becomes successful

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and is then called a "Jan-Guru". As regards the second method, it is stated that there are several *Guru Boṅgas*. The man who is devoted to them and has faith on them sees them coming to him in dreams. He then knows that the *Boṅgas* are pleased with him and want his worship. If the pupil likes it, he offers vermilion and *dhup* (incense) in the names of the *Boṅgas*, he saw in his dream. The *Boṅgas* again appear before him in dreams and tell him of their powers and ask him to worship them. With the series of *Boṅgas* thus appearing before him, the pupil becomes *Koñka* (puzzled). He then goes to the *Boṅgathans* (the places where the *Boṅgas* live) and remains there for some days. He talks with the spirits and they assure him that whenever he remembers them, they will be at his beck and call and tell him whatever he wants to know. Thus getting his boon, the pupil returns home and continues to worship the *Boṅgas* and practise his power.

Conclusion

Magic and witch-craft are an essential part of the belief of most of the Hinduised tribes and the pre-Dravidian people resident in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Although it cannot be vouched for a certainty as to whether the Santals borrowed it wholesale from the Hindus, there is some internal

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evidence showing the influence of Hindu ideas on Santal magical practices. In the race of life, the Santal finds inexplicable super-normal phenomena. He does not know how to react to the unknown and unknowable; so he has recourse to magic to deal with the impersonal forces and energies through appropriate rites and spells. This is done not by all the Santals, but only by the *Ojha*, a specialist in the art of magic and witch-craft. And he is generally the common doctor for all the Hinduised tribes and the Muṇḍà people. What the witch-doctor does is to practise the art of dissociating himself with the aim of spirit-communication, when he chants some magic formulae and makes the patent gestures while he performs the time-honoured rites to conjure the spirits. All these he does with the aid of some spirits, and although his mission is like the priest of religion to attain curative results that endure to the benefit of Santals individually or the tribe taken as a whole, it cannot be said that anti-social results do not follow due to the activities of some malignant *Ojhas* out to wreak personal vengeance on their enemies with the aid of malevolent spirits.

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538 how he made a meal of his friend along with the chickens. But there is retribution in store, and the "The Jackal Punished" shows how the crafty animal met with his death at the hands of the chickens. The presence of mind of foxes is illustrated by the story "Fox and his Wife," in which we see how a matrimonial misunderstanding between the couple was amicably solved in presence of a greater menace in the shape of their arbitrator, the tiger. But as the leopard cannot change his skin, the fox cannot live without his cunning and we soon read how as private tutor to the children of a crocodile, Mr. Fox eats up his pupils.

Santals have other stories dealing with the rest of the animals, equally full of interest. We see how the elephant ran a race with ants and found them running neck-to-neck at every step, forgetting that they might not be the actual competitors. We learn how friendship between the strong and the weak does not last and how the latter always seeks an opportunity to injure the former. But this pessimistic proposition has its exception in the case of children, and we read of an undying love between a tiger-cub and a calf.

Tales of Bongas

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In course of the previous pages, we have seen that *Bongas* are spirits who exist everywhere and take an active part in human affairs. But the most

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But the most uncanny part of the whole problem is that they assume human shapes, and thus like to enter into marital union with Santals of the opposite sexes.

A perusal of the stories relating to *Boṅgas* reveals that in their houses the *Boṅgas* have strange coiled up seats as hoods of serpents (*Boṅga gando*, in Mayurbhanj Santali), near which, fearful tigers* and leopards crouch, spreading consternation to the human beings kidnapped. They eat like men, but when their dinner is brought into this earth of ours, lo and behold! it will change into leaves and cow-dung, in the twinkling of an eye. Unions between human beings and *Boṅgas* have their temporal advantages, and we see how during the pendency of a liaison between a Santal and a *Boṅga*-girl, all his affairs prospered beyond expectation.

The *modus operandi* of *Boṅga*-lovers in forming such unions is seen in the story of how a *Boṅga*-girl,

* On this point Mr. Samra Mañjhi of Bantali, Rairangpur, Mayurbhanj stated as follows:—

Some Boṅgas have their serpents, tigers, deer and bears as their workers. The serpents are their seats, the tigers are their dogs, the deer are their oxen and the bears are their servants. The beasts do not always remain in the Boṅgas' house. They roam about the jungles, but they remain under their master's control. Whenever the Boṅga calls on them, they are present, ready to carry out his orders. In Santali, the serpents are called *Boṅga gando*, the tigers are *gutrut seta*, the deer *Kada* and *dari* and the bears are *Kanmi*.

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776 inhabiting a spring, cast a spell on a Santal youth
539 on whom she had taken a fancy. The boy found
588 himself spirited away into a pool, where he found dry land and many houses. There he lived with the girl for a long time, forgetting everything of this earth, in merry chases with tigers as hunting-dogs, (*Gutrut seta*, as called by Mayurbhanj Santals).

The special vision, thus obtained, helped him to see how there were crowds of *Boṅgas* living in villages like men. He had the strange knowledge that in December, when Santals thresh rice, the *Boṅgas* carry off half of it.

776 But the saving grace of the whole situation is
539 that these thieves can be detected by human beings. Thus we learn of a Boundary *Boṅga* being overheard by a Santal, while maturing a plan of theft with his wife. The *Boṅga* was thus baulked of his impious intentions by the farmer, who harvested his corn during the temporary absence of the godling, taking care to sacrifice a pig and offering a plate of flour to his might-have-been spoiler.

Witch-Craft Stories

754 From the several stories relating to witch-craft, we gather that the Santal women learnt the art from Marań Buru and how they decoy little girls and teach them the craft, so that it may not die out.

This initiation has its weird aspect. For we see,

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on being abducted by force, these little pupils are made to command tigers so that they (pupils) may lose all fear. The next stage is reached when the students are led to the most powerful *Boṅgas* and are trained how to pray for their uncanny gifts and to become possessed. Thus emerges from the school, the full-fledged witch, holding a light in her hand and flourishing a broom tied round her waist. She is now formally married to a *Boṅga*, although, she may have a second husband in the person of a man in the social sense. 754

The curriculum thus completed, the witch is now awarded her degree (*Sid atang*) by pulling out a man's liver and eating it with her trainer. Should she refuse this cannibalistic meal, she will turn lunatic or meet with her death.

From the dozen stories in Mr. Bompas' collection, we learn that there are men also who learn the craft, and we read the strange protest of a man, who, after initiation into witch-craft, refused to eat a human being, because he was an orphan and had no relations to eat. The Santal social fabric is thus full of witches who marry men in disguise and merrily meet together at night to devise plans how to eat their kith and kin. And when they leave the beds of their Santal husbands to meet their *Boṅga* lovers, they keep behind a *Boṅga*-woman as a substitute-wife. But, it may be that the man 954 538 [462] [776]

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754 538 [776] may become suspicious and brand the partner of his bed with red-hot fuel. Then it is for the *Boṅga* to fly away "in a flame of fire." Thus they masquerade in the garb of wives and dear relations, and if at all, are discovered by accident. We read in the story "Two Witches" how one Chandrai discovered the plan of a woman and her mother-in-law, both witches, to eat up the husband of the former, while causing the witch-doctors to see the faces of two other innocent women as casting the spell, in the oiled *sal-leaf*. "The old woman took up a hatchet and went to where her son was digging the hole. She waited till he bent down to throw the earth with his hands and then cut open his back and pulled out the liver and heart and brought them into the house. Her unfortunate son felt a spasm when his mother struck him but he did not know what had hurt him and there was no visible wound."*

776 538 Similarly, in "*The Sarsagun Maiden*", we see how a Santal bride was spirited away by a *Boṅga* youth and kept captive till she was rescued by the chivalrous bridegroom.

Even school boys are not spared the amorous attentions of Boṅgas. We are treated to the story of such an abducted pupil with his slate and books,

* P. 433, *Folk-tales of the Santal Parganas*, Bompas.

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who was conveyed to the nether-world and detained till he grew home sick.

The extent of interest taken by *Boṅgas* in human affairs, is best illustrated by another story, "The *Boṅga* Headman," in which we find how an invisible Headman advised Santals on all tribal matters and even helped the villagers with utensils for village-feasts.

If men have goats and cows for their cattle, the *Boṅgas* have their deer. This we see in "*Lakhan and the Boṅgas*".

Boṅgas can even be thieves. One of the folk-tales tells of such a spirit as residing in the house of the Headman, and we read how he stole every kind of grain and food, cooked and uncooked, from the houses of the villagers.

Whenever a Santal falls in trouble, he thinks a *Boṅga* requires propitiation. We read of seven brothers in "The *Boṅga's* victim," who do not hesitate to dedicate their beloved sister as a sacrifice to such a godling, as a reward to him for showing water to them after a tiresome hunt.

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They can be capable of gratitude. We see how a youth named Ramai was endowed with the third eye, through the grace of a *Boṅga* he had saved from exorcists, by which he saw *Boṅgas* ordinarily invisible and followed the speech of ants.

Again we hear how "The Sister-in-law who

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776 538 754 Again we hear how "The Sister-in-law who was a Witch" requisitioned the services of an immense bearded *Boṅga*, with long matted hair, to kill her brother-in-law by setting on a tiger for the offence that he, in a playful teasing mood, was delaying the eating of the dinner she had brought to the field.

Witches can be, however, very useful devils. If detected and cornered, they can be of immense service to men. This we see in the story of Ramjit *Boṅga*, where a witch, on her secret being out, promised to be the tribal *Ojha* and cure the diseases of the Santals. Once a witch, always a witch: the man who has once learnt it cannot at any time forget the craft.

538 *Fondness for Verbal Quibbles and Metaphors*

Any one reading the folk-tales of the Santals cannot but be struck with the love the tribe displays for speaking in enigmatic riddles and metaphors. We consider it worth-while to devote special attention to this feature.

539 In the "Fool and his dinner" we see how a Santal asked his mother-in-law about the recipe of a dish he was offered at dinner and was told, "I have cooked that which is behind you." The fool stole the door, and tried to cook it, but all that his mother-in-law meant was that she had cooked shoots of bamboo. Failure to understand such quibbles

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Here is a person consoling a Santal named Kisun, to wait patiently for a better day when the drought would be over and rains would shower to enable the corn grow: —

Bilkema gele Kisun mathai hat dite Kisun
Kene Kisun kando?
Dhaner sis dada marigela
Matira chati phati gela.
Na Kisun kandore na Kisun bhabare.
Iswarer maya jadi hayta primthimite, jal jadi pareta,
Tumi Kisun khiti samara.

(Translation)

Why, O Kisun, are you weeping resting your head on your palm near the *bil* (lake)?,
The ears of corn, O brother, have dried away,
The heart of the earth breaks (through the drought).
Don't cry, O Kisun, don't worry, O Kisun,
Should God will it and rains fall on earth,
You Kisun can reap corn in plenty.

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Plenty of devotional songs are sung by the Santals in honour of the tribal gods. Here is one invoking Mònṛènko (the Fives):

Mònṛènkodo mònṛènboeha
Ja Gosane turui kòdo turuiboeha

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• 776 533 539 Mònṛènkoko ruia ḍhelka ḍemba
Ja Gosane, turuikoko naranaka sakaa.

(Translation)

(Men) The Fives are five brothers.
(Women) O, the six goddesses* are six sisters.
(Men) The fives beat on broad *demba* (musical instruments).
178 77 533 539 (Women) O, the six goddesses blow on horns.
[538] We think that here we may usefully quote a song reflecting reformist ideas so far as Santal religious practices are concerned. It is not definitely known if a Christian idea or the Sapha Hòṛ philosophy is being given expression to in the following lines, but anyhow we smell something new:

Num rakap kate naṛka sapha kate,
Dhòròm mundil teñ bòlòyena,
Dhòròm mundilrè bòlò kate dhòròm puthi yiñ parhaolet,
Hòrak dhòròmho ruaṛèna.

(Translation)

A man is presumably speaking to himself:
After bath and washing my hair with (the soapy) mud,

* The six goddesses are named, Dangi, Pungi, Hisi, Dumni, Chita and Kapra. They are all wives of Mònrènko (the Fives).

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APPENDIX I

SEX LIFE OF THE SANTAL

121 In course of the previous chapters, we have given the readers an idea of the Santal's life in general. We feel, however, that to probe deeply into the instinctive principles that govern the life of the tribe, we should deal with their sex-life in some detail. Rev. Verrier Elwin in his "The Baiga" and Dr. Firth in his account of the Tikopia have given admirable glimpses of this side of the tribes they have reviewed and knowing well how in these days, anthropologists like to get acquainted with the sprouting and development of the sex-instinct, with the scientist's belief that "where the sex is impure there are no flowers in nature," we take courage in both hands to place before the reader the results of our investigations amongst the Mayurbhanj Santals on the subject.

The dawn of the instinct

831 842 [876] "Children are equipped with a complete phallic knowledge by Cando Boṅga (Supreme Deity). It is ordained by him as to whether a man will have progeny or not; so we find some men are denied children, although they mate like others," said an old Santal to us. They want children; they like children. Overpopulation, a dismal apprehension

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food-gatherers. The Santals fall in the category of the primary or secondary cultural strata in the scheme of Pater Schmidt. The idea of a supreme being or a personal high god is well known amongst the primitive tribes of Central Provinces, Chota-Nagpur and Assam Thus according to Dalton, he is called Boro by the Kharias, Ote Boram or Sing Bonga by the Hos, Dula Deb or Pharsi Pen by the Gonds, Bura Penu or Bela Penu by the Khonds. In Assam, he is known as the Father by the Abors, as old bearded Rishi Salgong residing in heaven by the Garos, as the creator Pa-thian amongst the Kukis and the great god Arnam Kethe amongst the Mikirs. The enquiries of Sir James Frazer in his "Worship of Nature" have led him to cite most of the Chota-Nagpur tribes as devotees of the Sun god as the supreme being. Rai Bahadur S C. Roy thus has analysed the Dharmes or Biri Bela of the Oraons as Sun god. Similarly, according to him, the Ber Pitia or Ber Chichha of the Mulers is the Sun god and so also is the Bhagavan of the Korwas. The Bur a Penu of the Khonds is also the God of light.

Coming now to the Santals we find almost all the authorities agreeing in conceding to them the idea of a supreme being. But there is a great diversity of opinion as to what he is called. According to Dalton, he is Sing Bonga amongst the Santals of Chota-Nagpur. Risley (Appendix VII, p. 446, People of India), on the authority of Skrefsurd, says that the supreme deity is called Thakur. E.G. Man, working in Orissa about fifty years ago, gives (Santhal and Santhalia, Chapter VI) the name of the supreme being of the Santals as Chando or Chando Bonga. Bompass (P. 402, Folklore of the Santal Parganas) in one of his folklores

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describes that Thakur Baba had made everything very convenient for mankind, etc. Rev. Bodding, who is the most recent and exhaustive worker on Santal beliefs and customs specially in the Mohulpaharia area in Santal Parganas, gives the name as Chando, 'the creator, the only one who gives and restores life' (Studies in Santal Medicine and Connected Folklore). Bodding further says that this name is often confounded with Cando the Sun. My own personal enquiries in the villages in Katikund within Dumka Damin and in the village on the base of the Zalway Hill, in Deoghar Sub-division, in the year 1934, elicited the information that the general name for God is Kando and the name for the Sun in that area is Sin Kando and for the moon Ninda Kando.

The Santal lives in harmony with the surroundings, having no temple and stooping to no idol made by his hand for the purpose of worship. It may be said that the Santal lives like a child of nature in rapport with all his surroundings, the hill, the dale, the spring or the grove being the objects of his reverential fear. They are the abodes of a supreme supernatural energy or the departmental spirits or the bongas. The bongas are friendly beings at times, but most often mischievous and naughty elves playing mischievous pranks with men, bringing them trouble and causing misery at times. These bongas are supposed at times to harass humanity, to eat people (as the Santals express it) because they are hungry, displeased, hurt or envious, and this eating is the devouring of health and substance of the person exposed to the displeasure of the spirits. The spirits may further be used by, or themselves use, the witches as medium.

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771 782 776 Thus in religion proper the main attitude of Santal Society towards the supernatural, is one of reverential fear in the presence of certain mysterious supernatural powers and beings and dependence on and propitiation to and prayerful submission to them, and the result expected is the averting of the ill-will and securing the good will of the supernatural beings and good luck to man in crops and cattle, health and progeny.

771 776 778 782 [784] The Santal religion is also not a little concerned with ancestral and certain other disembodied souls and Nature-spirits and deities. The rites employed to establish relations with them are mainly supplications and prayers, offerings of sacrifices and the ceremonial sharing of sacrificial food besides certain special observances and taboos.

771 [754] [776] The Santal believe that the supernatural influence is not often inimical and evil. Their idea is that there is no possibility of malevolent influence being turned to a benevolent or good one, the only practical question for them is how to stop it and, in the case of witches, how to stop and punish it. Bongas and witches know how to do evil to people but more often than not also how to do them good.

771 829 [182] The Santal religion in its social aspect is essentially a tribal matter and has helped to strengthen the social unity and quicken the sense of social responsibility, and his concept of righteousness is bound up with his social or tribal consciousness. As the Santal Society has not yet got much beyond a limited tribal consciousness his conception of righteousness is not concerned with the essential or absolute standard of righteousness of things.

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614 None of these appear to be associated with the idea of culture heroes as amongst the Amerindians. [538] The folk-lore shows indeed some stories centering round the plants (betel-palm, Panjaun tree, Sabai grass) and animals (tiger, jackal, leopard, crab). Besides these some of the clans' names centre round industrial objects and articles of usefulness such as chain, earthen vessel, etc. These would be more in line with a belief in objects possessing mana and venerated as such and gradually getting associated with exogamous sub-divisions which might have had a hand in the invention or diffusion of those useful objects. There is no [796] seasonal recurring ceremonial round these objects meant for the preservation or propogation of the animals or plants venerated as ancestors, as in Australia. There [784] is indeed some taboo in the use by the particular sub-clan of the plant and animal venerated as its ancestor. The animal and plant thus venerated are taboo to the clans; none can hunt it, nor can they partake of its flesh. But because of the observation of this taboo the Santals are in no sense plant and animal worshippers. [796] It seems that their idea of bongas inhabiting all creeks and corners of nature, has been extended only to the region of certain animals and plants. In the folklore [773] the bongas are generally represented as using seats of [825] hooded cobras and certain serpents are naturally vene- [262] rated as clan-ancestors; on the other hand, the common water-snake (Dhamna) is eaten by almost all the Santals. Of the animals not eaten by the Santals all are not associated with clan-names such as the Frog, Gibbon, Elephant, Dog, etc.

771 If the religion of the Santals may thus be described 776 as veneration of a Supreme Being and reverential awe

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or fear of certain good or evil spirits surrounding him, his practical life may be said to centre round certain other pseudo-scientific or magical rites and ceremonies. He is constantly trying to dodge, control or press into service the innumerable mischievous spirits (bongas, etc.) and forces (tejo, etc.) that bring all the misery and disaster in life. 771 776

Thus in magic, the attitude of the Santal is mainly one of the defiance of control and domination over unseeen mysterious powers and the result intended is the expulsion of evil or compulsion of natural or supernatural forces and powers in the production of desired favourable conditions or results. The Santal magic referred to above, is primarily concerned with mysterious impersonal forces and powers residing mostly in natural or artificial objects and the instruments employed in dealing with them are principally charms and spells, adjurations and incantations as also certain traditional observances and taboos. 771 789

As has been beautifully and lucidly explained by Rai Bahadur Roy in the case of the Oraons, the Santals attitude to religion and magic is not mutually exclusive but complementary and supplementary. His magical practices are the result or part of his science and constitute his applied pseudo-science. They never crowd out those simple religious rites of veneration to and propitiation of, the mysterious author of our being. But whereas in the daily affairs of life of the civilized man the scientific physician is at hand, the Santal, like other primitive people, has recourse to his Medicine-man and Bonga-doctor. These latter come with their 756

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756 courtyard there is an elevated place, square, or rectangular, the size generally being 1½'×1½'×1'. [824] It is made of earth, and a *Tulsi* (Ocymum Sanctum L.) plant is planted in the centre of the mound over which [346] a shed is erected. The shed is so large that it can easily accommodate 10 to 12 persons. The shed is erected by the unmarried disciples, married ones have nothing to do with the erection of the shed. The posts [789] of this shed are of sal wood. In the centre of the shed a hen's egg and a chir sakum (a thin kind of iron wristlet or arm ornament) are kept for preventing witches from [562] molesting them. The course lasts for four months. A woman cannot be an *ojha*. The first act of the *ojha* is what is called *Akhra rara* which means performing the opening ceremony, to ensure that all may go well and without any hindrance. The first evening the disciples bring along with them some *sindur* which is given to the *guru*. In five different places in the courtyard the [776] *ojha* makes vermilion marks in the name of the following five different *bongas*:—

(1) Kamru guru (the reputed first teacher of *ojha* science to the Santals),

(2) Sin *Bonga* (the sun),

(3) Kali mai (the goddess Durga), 1 ^

(4) Dibi mai (the goddess Durga),

(5) Ganga mai (the Ganges goddess).

756 782 539 776 The following invocation is offered to all of them by him after changing the names of the *Bongas*:

"Nokoe, Kamru guru (or, as the case may be, Serma Sin Thakur, etc.) amintikawam kana; nokoe cela korako

1 [Erratum: this should read "(the goddess Kali)."
^ Cf. errata sheet, category 116, p. x - Analyst]

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durup akana ; ado ninda nuta ko kijuka calakoko; tobe badi bairi noko cela alo bare lagaoako ma alo jemon hoe husit, tatka birki hoyok ma ; nae napae bareko hijuk calak mako !"

(English Translation).

"Here you see, Kamru guru, I am making a mark for thee ; here, you see, disciples are sitting ; they will come and go at night in darkness ; then may malevolence and enmity not come in contact with these disciples ; may there be no spell of an evil eye, no sudden fright ; in perfect safety may they come and go."[1]

After having invoked the *bongas*, the *guru* utters the opening mantra which is as follows :

"Akhra khollom, makra kholo, pir khollo, ke khollom ? Guru khollo, guru gia; maekhollo khollom siri Kahri gia Kamru dohoe khollo".

(English Translation).

"I have opened the place of performance, I have opened the site of performance. I have set free the stools to sit on. Who has set free (or opened)? The *guru* has set free, by the guru's knowledge ; the mother (likely Kali) has set free ; I have opened by knowledge of Sri Kahri, by the grace of Kamru I have opened."[2]

When these preliminaries (opening ceremonies) have been gone through all is ready for the commencement of teaching.

[1]P. O. Bodding, op, cit., p. 47.

[2]Rev. P. O. Bodding, op. cit., p. 48.

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tell him 'Now let us hear the oracle'. The *Jan* then takes his fee which is a rupee and tells them the name of a *bonga* or a witch who is at the bottom of their troubles.

Then they return to their village. If the *Jan* says that a *bonga* is giving the trouble then the patient will promise sacrifice. If the *Jan* declares any woman to be a witch, this woman is harassed in every possible way, fined and driven out of the village, and at times killed.

At present the *Jans* are, according to Santal belief, not like the old righteous ones. The *Jans* of ancient time got their knowledge through dreams at night or through visions in the daytime, not possessed by a divination spirit like *Jans* of the present day. Now-a-days the *Jans* keep informers who find out and tell them all particulars. *Jans* of to-day are very careful in fixing the blame. They generally fix the blame on some *bonga* or other in preference to a witch.

Classification of the supreme, superior and supernatural beings: It is very difficult to attempt a classification of the orders of the supernatural beings which constitute the religious belief of a community. The classification would often imply the existence of a notion of hierarchy of the supernatural beings, one being far superior to the rest. It is curious to observe that this supreme being is never worshipped in the faith that he can never work out any evil. As for the rest the rank may be determined in the order in which worship is offered to them. But here again the difficulty would lie in the fact that a particular occasion would demand predominance being given to particular spirits. Thus the classification would be more or less a division in parallel lines, for it

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would be hard to decide the superiority or inferiority of the ancestral spirits on the one hand and the departmental deities of nature on the other. However the following eight classes would differentiate the types of these supernatural beings in Santal belief. [776] [775]

1. The highest divinity recognised by the Santal is *Kando*, the Supreme Being, the Creator. He is the only one who can give and restore life and who has created the trees, plants, animals, etc.

2. The spirits of dead ancestors are placed by the Santals in a separate class by themselves. [775]

3. The next is composed of household spirits known as *Orak bongas* and tutelary spirits known as *Abge bongas*. The names of the *Orak bonga* are the following:

1. Baspahar. 2. Deswali. 3. Seas 4. Goraya
5. Barpahar. 6. Sarchawdi. 7. Thuntatursa.

The names of the *Abge bonga* are the following:

1. Darasore or Dharasanda. 2. Ketkomkudra 3. Chainpa denagarh.
4. Garsinku. 5. Lilachandi. 6. Dhanghara.
7. Kudracandi. 8. Barhara. 9. Duarseri.
10. Kudraj. 11. Gasain Era. 12. Achali
13. Deswali. 14. Pahardana.

It may be noted here that the Santal would not divulge the name of his *Orak bonga* and *Abge bonga* to any one but his eldest son and I was fortunate to get the names from the Christian converts.

4. The fourth class is the hunting spirit known as *Rongo ruji*, a bonga to whom worship is made on the

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night before the men start for the annual tribal hunt with utterly obscene songs and practices.

5. The fifth class of spirits are the village deities, which are the following :

1. Jaher Era (female). 2. Gosain Era (female).
3. Truko Muruko (male). 4. Marang Buru (male).
5. Parganat (male).

The Santals worship the above deities periodically in the sacred grove.

6. There are spirits of the village boundary known as *Sima bongas*, and of the outskirt of the village known as *Bahra bongas*.

7. Next come tramp or stray spirits who are spirits of persons and children dying an unnatural death.

8. The spirit of the father-in-law's household, as is believed, sometime follows the bride to her new house which is known as *Naihar bonga*. As soon as a Santal is convinced that the *Naihar bonga* has come along he will either make yearly sacrifices to him, or, as there is some risk connected with it as one does not know the requirements of the foreign *bonga*, he will make arrangements to send him back at once, for by himself he will not return. If either is not done the consequences are disease and death in the house.

Another spirit that must be exercised[1] is *Kisar bonga*. The *Kisar bonga* is of a rather uncertain character. A man who has got such a *bonga* into his house will be wealthy through him as he steals from others and carries all to the house of his master, but if he is offended there is no end to the mischief he will make. If on his account disease is brought into a

1 [Erratum: this should read "exorcised." Cf. errata sheet, category 116, p. x -- Analyst]

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family, the whole of it will be exterminated if the *Kisar bonga* is not effectually sent away from the house.

9. The last to be grouped are the spirits or rather mysterious powers residing in or connected with certain objects such as battle-axe (*Kapi Karan bonga* and *Bhalua Bijai bonga*. *Bhalu* is most likely a shortened form of *Bhalua Kapi*, the name of a common form of their battle-axe), and some weird natural objects such as an abnormally gnarled bamboo-shoot, tree-roots, some weird-looking fantastic-shaped hills or a roaring cataract, a waterfall or a tank-side. These spirits are not objects of worship nor do they receive sacrifices but are mischievous spirits who have to be scared away or exorcised by the *ojha* (spirit-doctor).

Santal religious ceremonies :

The Santals have no temple nor any shed for worship but they have a *Sthan* (place) known as *Jahirsthan* where they worship the village deities. The *Jahirsthan* is a place where religious ceremonies of the village are performed by the Santals. It is situated at the end of the village and it must be within the boundary of the village. It should consist of trees belonging to the primeval forest. A cluster of sal trees about twenty to twenty-five in number, is always required. Among these trees three are essential and they must stand in a row. At the base of each of these three trees a small stone is placed representing the deities *Jaherera*, *Truko Muruko*, *Marang-Buru*. The fourth is an Ashan tree which grows anywhere near those three sal trees, and a stone is put on its base representing the diety *Pargana Bonga*. The fifth and

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Baha Parab. Next in importance is the *Baha parab* which is held in the Bengali month Phalgun (February-March). This festival takes place when the sal trees (shorea robusta) begin to flower. *Baha* is a Santali word which means flower. The purpose of holding this festival is that the new year is well commenced. Drinking, dancing and singing go on in this festival also. The festival takes place in the *Jaherthan* and the *Naike* and *Kudum Naike* worship in the *Jaherthan*. On the first day of the festival the young people of the village build two sheds in *Jaherthan*, one for *Jaher-era*, *Turuko Moreko* and *Marang Buru* and the other for *Gosain era*. The *sthans* are cleaned by plastering with cowdung. Then they go to bathe and oil several articles (winnowing fan, basket, bow and arrows, battle-axe, broom, a wristlet, a necklace and bell and horn of a buffalo which they call *sakua*) which are to be used next day, when three persons become possessed by the three first bongas mentioned above. The whole night is spent in drumming at the house of the *Naike*, where all assemble with *bongas* (the persons who will be possessed with bongas are called *bongas*). Jaher-era is a female diety and a man who is possessed with this *bonga* takes the ornaments, the basket and the broom; *Moreka* takes the bow and arrow and *Marang Buru* carries the battle-axe. With these articles they start running for the *Jaherthan* followed by the boys who carry drums cymbals, bugle and bull-roarer. On arriving at the *Jaherthan*, *Jaher-era* sweeps the place; the *Naike* asks the *bongas* (i.e., those who are possessed with the deities) for the things they have brought and places them on a mat. He then asks them questions

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movement which had some tinge of Hinduism. This movement was started in 1871. The leader of this movement was known as Bhagrit of Taldiha and a title of '*babaji*' was added to his name. The word '*babaji*' is a Hindu word and so it seems that it was taken from the Hindus. Later on he was arrested and imprisoned and for the time being this movement was suppressed. Again in 1880 it was revived by one Dubia Gosain who came from the vicinity of Deoghar. His activities were more pro-Hindu. Several Hindu practices were introduced by this movement and one distinguishing feature was the worship of the '*babaji*' in the manner of reverence paid to the Sanyasis by the Hindus. The religious side of the movement had a colouring of Hinduism. The '*babaji*' smeared his body with ashes, took ganja and kept long hair and worshipped Mahadeo (Siva).

It is probable that due to this Kharwar movement the Santals have introduced some Hindu deities—Kalimata, Lakhmi mai, (goddess of wealth) Parvati, Mahadeo etc. in their pantheon of *Bongas*. The Santals have belief in Rama and Krishna, the Hindu Avtars.

The word Thakur is sometimes used by them in place of their High God Cando. The word Thakur is of Sanskrit origin and the Hindus use this name for gods in general.

Some of the festivals of the Santals have Hindu counter parts. The Pata Parab of the Santals is the imitation of the Hindu festival "Charak Puja". In this puja the Hindus worship Siva (Mahadeo). The Santal Sankrat festival is equivalent to the Hindu Pous

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by their parents. It is no uncommon sight to see a man striding along the road with a carrying pole across his shoulders; in the basket slung from one end he carries some of the family cooking utensils, while the youngest member of the family sits confidently in a basket at the other end. The immediate economic advantage of this annual migration, without which they might be forced to leave their present homes with dire consequences for their tribal stability, is secured at a heavy price. In addition to the toll on their health, tribal sanctions are loosened away from the village. Offenders against the tribal law, runaway brides, women accused of witchcraft, and many others who do not wish to submit to discipline can find a refuge away from their homes, and each year the number of those who elect to stay "east" is growing.

The older generation regard the yearly exodus as the prime cause of moral laxity because it flouts an old taboo. Formerly no Santal was supposed to cross the Damodar river, which forms the northern and eastern boundary of the Bankura district. When at first men were drawn away to work over the river the women were not allowed to accompany them. The reason given for this prohibition was that by crossing the river they would bring misfortune on themselves and their villages. The underlying causes may be connected in part with the fact that the tribal gods are forest gods and could not protect them on the other side of the river, where there are no forests; and partly linked with the fact that the Damodar has an important place in their customs for disposing of the dead.[1] Whatever they be, the old taboo is now ignored.

During the last few days of *Pus* (mid-January) and at each month's end till the Spring festival, parties of men, women and children can be seen returning along the roads in single file, the women always in front. They are bent on reaching their own villages before the festivities which mark the turn of the month. The old people watch for their return and the relieving of their responsibilities. They enjoy greater leisure and may be seen more often squatting on the narrow ledges that surround the houses, sunning themselves. As men and women return from the east they find employment chiefly in felling trees and in carting both wood and leaves to the railway. For many years the traditional attitude of the Santal to the forest has been to make clearings and begin cultivation. The forests of the area are privately owned by the landlords, and they are exploited for their timber.

[1] See Chapter 12, p. 153.

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there a white hare jumped and passed along.' From there till the present day these words are used at weddings. All the festivals began from the time that they spent at the True *Sarjom* tree—the *Baha, Sohrae, Karam, Jom Sim, Bapla, Abge,* and many others.

At the time of their weddings they addressed *Pilcu Haṛam, Pilcu Buḍhi* and *Maraṅ Buru*:[1]

Greetings, Lord, Great Spirit, in the name of marriage
Two kinds of beer have we applied.
Here then we present them to you;
Here then do not importune us further, Lord.
Do not create either stomach or head pains.
So, Lord, may they laugh and talk together,
Accept our gifts and take them happily, Lord.
Today we are marrying these two, Lord.
May they live to a good old age,
May they become old man and old woman together, Lord.[2]

After cutting up the female *murum* and feasting and drinking, they two divided them all into clans while they were on their way home:

1. The original Hāsdāk' or Nij Hāsdāk'	
2. The one who ground down the horn	Mạrnḍi
3. The one who killed a sunbird ..	Soren Sipahi
4. The one who carried a deer	Hembrom
5. The one who killed an owl	Ṭuḍu
6. The one who killed a kingfisher ..	Kisku
7. The one who made a bundle of stale rice	Baske
8. The one who carried an umbrella over his head	Besra

[1] *Liṭạ* is the "proper name" of the chief spirit of the tribe, who is also known as *Maraṅ Buru*.

[2] The Santali text of this invocation is given here. It is a good example of a sacrificial prayer:

Johar Gosāē, Maraṅ Buru, bapla ñutumte
Jhardak' tapam dak' lagaogeya bajaogeya.
Tobekhan Gosāē ma tobe emam calam kanale
Tobekhan Gosāē abaṛte tobaṛte alom koeka ataṅka Gosāē.
Lac' hasu bohok' hasu alom sirjauk'a buḍauk'a Gosāē.
Ma tobe, Gosāē, landae baṛe kathaekin Gosāē,
Sukte saṅārte ataṅtale telaetale Gosāē,
Teheṅ dole baplayet'kina Gosāē.
Aḍharu buḍharukok'makin
Haṛamko buḍhiko makin Gosāē.

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practice of making an offering of his own blood is followed by the magician[1] when he is attempting to cure sickness. While the function of the priest is to deal with the tribal spirits, it would seem that his co-priest has to propitiate relatively unknown and fearful spirits; one might almost describe him as a kind of "minister for foreign affairs" in relation to the spirit world.

Santal worship centres round its sacred places, the most prominent of which is the *jaher*, the sacred grove usually to the west of the village. It consists of a number of tall, slim *sarjom* trees with perhaps one or two trees of other varieties, the whole having been left standing since the village was first founded. The surrounding forests have been cut down to form land for cultivation and for the homesteads, so the grove stands out from the landscape. Apart from festival occasions there is usually little to show the sacredness of the place, but the practice varies greatly from village to village. Two of the tallest trees standing side by side are thought to be the abodes of *Maran Buru*, the national spirit of the Santals, and of his female consort *Jaher Budhi*, the Old Lady of the Sacred Grove. At the side of the former tree one sometimes discerns the blackened stones of the fireplace at which the village priest cooks – apart from the rest of the village—his share of the offerings. Other relics of festivals may be found, such as an ear of paddy still attached to its stalk, tied round one of the trees and left there since the time of the offering of first-fruits. Sometimes there are semi-permanent posts in the ground near the more sacred trees, two in front of the trees and two at the back, with cross-pieces joining them to form the framework on which a temporary thatch is placed during the festivals over the place where the sacrifices are performed. One of the trees is the abode of the "Five and Six", and near it a post standing in the ground represents the place of one *Laga Thakur*, who acts as their watchman. Removed to a little distance is the place where the food of the villagers is cooked: the meals eaten here are communal. There are other trees at which the *kudam naeke* makes his blood offering to the boundary spirits, and these are indicated during the festivals by means of a piece of string. In some villages one finds indications of places at the edge of the grove at which one or other of the sub-clans performs its sacrifices. In some groves the space at the foot of the principal trees is tended carefully as befits a shrine. The ground is cleared and plastered regularly with cowdung and water, a cactus hedge is planted to

[1] The *ojha*. See Chapter 8, pp. 94 ff.

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keep away marauding cattle and goats, and large earthen effigies of elephants and horses are set in position as worthy mounts for the spirits. The grove is not usually much more than a hundred yards away from the westernmost house in the village, but sometimes one finds that the dwellings of the people have been moved owing to sickness or some other reason and the grove remains in its original site. The determination of the site of the grove is an important element in founding a new village. Naturally there are few opportunities for observing the process at the present time, but the tradition is kept alive among the Santals, who tell that the choice of the site is made by the spirits themselves. They do so by taking possession of certain of the villagers and expressing their wishes through them. These men take stones and place them at the foot of three *sarjom* trees, which should be in a row, two for *Maraṅ Buru* and *Jaher Budhi* close together, and the third for the "Five and Six". Other trees are then set apart for a second female spirit known as *Gosāē Era*, and also for the *pargana boṅga* and the boundary spirits.

Maraṅ Buru is the spirit who possesses the most clearly defined individuality. The name means "Great Mountain", but it is interesting to note that the word *buru* means not only a mountain but is also used for spirits in general, especially when it is coupled with the more usual *boṅga*. The use of *buru* combined with *boṅga* suggests that *buru* originally meant "mountain", that it was then used for "mountain spirit" and then as a synonym for *boṅga*. Another name for *Maraṅ Buru* is *Liṭa*, which is a proper name and does not appear to refer to any attributes. The name *Liṭa* is frequently used in stories and also in conversation, but it is not used in invocations. The Santal name for a rainbow is the "bow of *Liṭa*". *Maraṅ Buru* is invoked on all occasions when offerings are made, and he is a complete sharer in all the fortunes of the tribe, good and evil. He seems to be regarded as a kindly but capricious old gentleman. The references to him in the mythology clearly indicate his dominant position. He appeared on the scene at a very early stage in the life of the first pair. He found them living in a state of innocence and told them that they had not yet learnt to taste the joys of life. After introducing himself to them as their grandfather and so establishing an intimate relationship between himself and them, he taught them how to brew beer and left them for a few days. When he returned he chuckled to see the change in their appearance, for during his absence they had become drunken.

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In that condition they had for the first time experienced sexual intercourse and, realizing their nakedness, they had clothed themselves. He taught them that they must always offer beer to him when they invoked his name.

The Old Lady of the Sacred Grove, *Jaher Budhi*, is by contrast a shadowy person. Bodding reports[1] that her name is said to be *Ram sałgi*, but except for the fact that offerings are made to her along with those made to *Maraṅ Buru* at festivals, little is known about her. The same may be said of the "Five and Six", who are thought of as a family of five brothers and one sister. It is only to the "Five" that offerings are made, and hence they are also frequently referred to as the "Five." One sacrifice suffices for them all. The "Five" are greatly feared because they are likely to cause some swift calamity when they are displeased.

The *Mąñjhi than*, the shrine of the spirits of the departed headmen, is the second of the sacred places in which the cult of the tribe is localized. The site is supposed to be fixed in much the same manner as that of the sacred grove. Local legends grow up round these shrines, and they exhibit many variations. Often they are situated somewhere near the centre of the village, to one side of the main street. In some instances the shrine consists of a raised mud platform over which there is a well-kept thatched roof supported on four corner posts and a central upright post about five feet high. In other cases it consists of a cleared space at the foot of a tree, and the roof of thatch is erected only at the times when sacrifices are offered. In some parts each departed headman is commemorated by a small stone which is placed in the shrine at the time of his death ceremonies, but in this area it is not possible to reckon the number of generations since the foundation of a village by the presence or absence of stones. Many of the villages have a history which extends back over more than six generations, and it appears that the stones which may have been placed in the past do not retain their sacredness over so long a period, and they have been removed. At the present time the immediate ancestors and also the original founder, revered as *Mąñjhi haṛam*, are honoured by setting up the clay effigies of elephants or horses in their names. Even the site may be shifted under the influence of new ideas. Thus in the purely Santal village of Jamedia there is a shrine in the village street not far from the headman's house which has been in its present position for about fifteen years. The villagers referred to it as the *Mąñjhi*

[1] Bodding, *Santali Dictionary*, Vol. III, p. 328.

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and in fact it is used extensively as a storeroom, particularly for stacking the bundles of reserve rice. Any man may pass through this opening, but no woman may do so unless she belongs to the family living there. The daughters of the house are debarred from going into the *bhitar* after they have married. After marriage a woman belongs to her husband's family, and this prohibition is one of several that are enforced with a view to ensuring that she shall not bring calamity on her husband's house by continuing to have dealings with the spirits of her father's home. She has to remove herself from their influence. Within the *bhitar* dwells the house spirit, and it is also visited by the ancestors of the family. There offerings of food and beer are made to the immediate ancestors. In certain instances sub-clan sacrifices are made in this inner room. The names of the spirits to whom the sub-clan sacrifices are made are kept secret. The knowledge of these names is handed down within each family from the father to the eldest son or other heir, and under no circumstances should it be imparted to others. An instance was reported of a man who was in deep distress because his father had died without his having had an opportunity of learning the name of the *abge*, as this spirit is called. He hoped to learn the name from one of his father's brothers, but this person also died before he could pass on the information. Shortly afterwards his dead uncle appeared to him in a dream and revealed the name, and he confirmed the correctness of the information by visiting yet another uncle who knew the secret. This story shows that the rules of silence are not too strictly observed within the family circle. Women are not allowed to learn the name, and in most cases they are excluded from participating in the sacrificial meal. The same prohibition applies to sons-in-law, though one of the Soren sub-clans is allowed to leave a portion of the food from the meal for their sons-in-law. When they summon them to eat, however, they address them as they would the household dogs, which emphasizes their separation from the family and from the sub-clan.

Some features of the Santal cult, as well as an indication of the ways in which it may develop, can be illustrated by a description of the shrine that stands on the outskirts of the village of Sarenga. This village was at first a Santal settlement, but it is now a place of nearly two thousand inhabitants, most of whom are Bengali Hindus. The present-day Santal inhabitants number barely one hundred, but amongst them are some who claim descent from the founders of the village, who lived,

so they say, nine generations ago.

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it impossible to build a house. They were indigo planters, whose compound lay to the south of the shrine. Every time they tried to build the walls would crack, so in the end they offered a libation of their spirits to Lokhon Mañjhi and all was well. In recent times a Bengali Christian has built himself a house between the old indigo compound, now the mission compound, and the shrine without so far having suffered any dire consequences, but Binu would stoutly affirm that he makes offering to Lokhon in secret!

The main intention of the Santal cult of sacrifice is to ensure the stability of the society and the wellbeing of its members. The usual burden of the prayers and invocations, the *bakhet*, is to threaten or cajole the spirits so that sickness may be kept away from the village and that the rains may not fail. The example of a prayer that has been quoted[1] throws light on the attitude of the worshipper and the language that he uses. The prayer is the accompaniment of certain material offerings, and a strong hope is expressed that *Marak Buru* will find the gifts adequate; there is, in fact, more than a suggestion that he ought to find them sufficient and do his duty in return. While material benefits are mainly sought,[2] this particular example reveals that Santal worshippers do sometimes look beyond the needs of the moment, for it is a prayer for a blessing of long life and happiness to be bestowed on a newly married couple. The language of the prayers is rhythmical; doublet words with rhyming endings and frequent repetition convey to the ear an effect similar to that given by rhymed verse. Often the prayers are spoken in colloquial Bengali, though the language in this case is Santali. The words themselves are not conceived of as "magical" in the sense that any alteration in their form or the omission of particular words would nullify the efficacy of the formula. There is obviously an element of magic in the ritual employed in sacrificing, but the prayers are uttered as accompaniment to the actions in order to draw the attention of the spirits to the latter. Most often the one who is uttering the prayer uses a loud and threatening tone of voice.

There is no individual approach to the *bongas*. Fellowship with them is maintained through sacrifices that are offered on

[1] See p. 67 above.

[2] Cf. E. O. James, *Comparative Religion*, 1938, p. 178: "In a primitive agricultural community requests for ethical and moral virtues could hardly be expected, since, as Cicero remarks, 'men call Jupiter greatest and best because he makes us not just or temperate or wise, but sound and healthy and rich and wealthy'." The citation is from *De Nat. Deorum*, III, 36, 87.

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behalf of a particular social unit, which is sometimes the whole village and sometimes as small as the family. Positively the goodwill of the *boiigas* is retained by the observance of the due sacrifices, negatively by the observance of taboo rules. Many of the taboos operative in the daily life of the Santals can be directly traced to the necessity for safeguarding the interests of the *boiigas*. The belief in the dangerous potentiality of women is reflected in the fact that all sacrifices are taboo for women in one sense or another. The fact that they may not eat the flesh of animals sacrificed to the *abge* has already been noted; they may not eat the flesh of any part of an animal sacrificed to *Marak Buru*, nor the head of any animal killed in a sacrifice at all. Although they may help in the preparations for sacrifices performed in the house, they are kept away from participation in the sacred grove. No woman may climb any of the trees in the grove, nor may she be present when the sacrifices are made, nor eat of the flesh of any animal there offered. The one exception to this rule is that a portion of the flesh of sacrificed animals is reserved for the wife of the priest. Other taboos are related only indirectly to the belief in spirits. The code of behaviour between relatives is sanctioned by a belief that any infringement of its provisions will result in retaliation by the spirits, who cause such diseases as leprosy, or who will inflict dire punishment after death and make it impossible for funeral ceremonies to be duly carried out. Sometimes the retaliation acts swiftly, as in the case related by a Santal concerning an uncle. This relative was on a journey away from home. He stopped at a certain village to obtain a drink of beer, and in his haste, being exceedingly thirsty at the time, he omitted first of all to spill a few drops as a libation to *Marak Buru* and his ancestors. This forgetfulness of a universal obligation was met apparently by almost immediate retribution. Soon after he had resumed his journey the man fell down—dead.

The *boiigas* can be distinguished both from the Supreme Being and from various other classes of spirits by the fact that there is between them and the Santals some degree of personal relationship. Many of the *boiigas* do not seem to have any very marked personal characteristics, but the Santal knows that in the normal course of events he will himself become a *boiiga* and will be dependent then for his happiness on those who come after him. Unless he dies in certain specified ways, once his funeral rites have been completed he will take his place among the ancestors, and his place in the hierarchy of the spirit world depends very much on his social status and correct behaviour in this one. The

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The personality of *Maran Buru* overshadows that of the Supreme Being in the consciousness of the Santals. The latter is universally acknowledged as the Creator, but he is far removed. *Maraṅ Buru* is the one who has made them what they are today. In the folk-tales there are frequent references to the Supreme Being in his character as the merciful provider, but these are stories of what happened "a long time ago". One example, in which the Supreme Being came and worked with the two sons of a widow and so altered their fortunes, has been translated above.[1] In another story which tells of a child who was left an orphan, he came down in the form of a man in order to comfort the child.[2] Sometimes in folk-tales extraordinary events are attributed to the action of the Supreme Being, as in a story that relates how a woman gave birth to a mongoose and one of her fellow villagers said: "This is indeed wonderful, that God should cause an animal to be born in the womb of a woman."[3]

Some of the names of the Supreme Being reveal the influence of the surrounding culture and reflect certain elements in Santal belief. The word *Ṭhākur* in Bengali, meaning "one who is worthy of worship", is applied indifferently to a god, an image, a Brahmin caste and any Brahmin cook. Santals sometimes apply it to spirits in general, but they usually reserve it as a term for the Creator. It is so used in a saying that is current in the area which explains why the Santals may not celebrate their Spring festival until after the corresponding Hindu festival, the Dol Jatra or Holi Puja, has been held. If the Santals do not wait till the Hindu festival is over, they say that *Ṭhākur* will be offered what has been left over from the offerings to the *bonga*s. Here *Ṭhākur* is undoubtedly regarded as the Lord of the *bonga*s and is incidentally identified with Sri Krishna, in whose honour the Dol Jatra is celebrated. In some parts the name *Ṭhākur Jiu* is used, *jiu* connoting "spirit" in the sense of the life principle. The word *jiu* is uncommon, the usual form of the term being *jiri*, but it is used as a suffix in the word *mac-jiu*, literally "mother spirit", which is the common word for a woman. *Ṭhākur Jiu*, which should perhaps have been printed as one word, is the term used in the printed account of the Traditions, and as these were first published in 1887, its subsequent currency may be due in some measure to that fact.

[1] See Chapter 5, p. 53.

[2] Bodding, *Santal Folk-Tales*, Vol. III, p. 73. Finding out why the child wept, he caused the child's mother to appear to him, but first told him not to weep or he would die.

[3] Bodding, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 80.

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THE WORLD INVISIBLE

The most usual term for "God" is *Cando* or *Cando boŋga*, and this reveals a connection between God and the sun. *Cando*, which means the Creator, also means the sun and "a month". When used in conjunction with *siŋ*, meaning either "day" or "sun", *siŋ cando* means simply the sun; with the word *ninda*, "night", it means the moon. Occasionally the Santals talk of *Siŋ boŋga* as synonymous with *Cando boŋga*. This association of ideas – it would be unwise to regard it as an identification—is shown in the practice adopted when an oath is taken. *Cando* is called on as a witness, and at the same time the man taking the oath raises his eyes to the sun. Again, when a Santal is being reinstated into the tribe, he is made to stand at the entrance to the village with a brass vessel full of water held up in his hands. The elders of the village approach him, whereupon he first performs a low obeisance in the direction of the sun, after which he speaks to the elders and makes open acknowledgment of his guilt and his determination to make amends. Following this, the oldest of the men from the village takes the brass vessel from the hands of the guilty person and bows in his turn in the direction of the sun.

In spite of one or two apparent exceptions, it seems true that *Cando* cannot be appeased or influenced by sacrifices. The fact that the weekly sacrifice in the shrine of Lokhon Mąŋjhi at Sarenga includes one in honour of *Cando* illustrates the process by which modifications may appear in the general practice; it is not a typical shrine. It is said that a sacrifice is offered to *Siŋ boŋga* during the clan festival known as *Jom Sim*, which is hardly ever performed. For the most part, belief in a Supreme Being is not operative. He is frequently mentioned in conversation as the source of good and bad weather, and also of good and bad health; it is common to hear such expressions as "By the mercy of *Cando* we are well" and "If *Cando* has mercy we shall obtain good crops". By such means do Santals acknowledge that all their magic, their prayers and their hard work are an insufficient guarantee that they will attain their heart's desire and that God's ways are inscrutable.

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CHAPTER 8

THE WORLD INVISIBLE—(2)

776 THE tribal *boŋgas* are the allies of the Santals in the struggle against adverse circumstances and untoward happenings, even though their influence is exercised mostly in a negative manner. Common interest as well as sentiment and tradition keep the human and the spirit partners together. There are, however, 775 other kinds of spirits with whom society through its accredited [171] representatives has no dealings. The belief in these latter spirits, the spirits of the malevolent dead and demons, is one which the Santals share with the peasantry of North India.[1] While there is much in the *boŋga* cult that is distinctive of the Santals, they seem to have absorbed the general beliefs of the region regarding spirits that are not worshipped but feared. They use the same terms as their neighbours and speak of *bhut*, *pret* and *curin*. These are the spirits of dead persons who have either died in some abnormal way or whose funeral ceremonies have not been completed. One Santal who was asked to describe the difference between the terms *bhut* and *boŋga* pondered his reply for a minute before saying: "Until the bones have been taken to the river all dead men are *bhuts*. These waylay people in the beds of streams. We fear them, and we do not look after them (*lit.* we do not feed them). We do look after the *boŋgas*, and they work for us." Santals do not seem to have made up their minds whether suicides automatically become malevolent spirits or not. Some think that they do, while one Santal affirmed that as death was rarely ascribed to natural causes suicide was not peculiar, being merely one of the ways in which evil influences worked on men's minds. Childless men become ghosts, and this belief is due to the fact that a son is desired who will light the funeral pyre. The *curin* form a special class of female ghosts with terrifying appearance. They are the spirits of women who died in childbirth, or while they were pregnant and after their child had quickened in the womb, and whose corpses had then not been disposed of in the right manner. Among the Santals, as among many other Indian [766] peoples, the husband is required to cut open his wife's body [171] and remove the foetus from it so that it may be buried separately. *Curin* haunt the beds of streams, where they lie in

[1] William Crooke, *Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, Oxford University Press, 1926, Ch. vii.

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wait for men. Women are protected from the designs of these ghosts by the iron bangle which they wear.

Ghosts of the dead and other private spirits who are given the title of *boŋga* form part of the stock-in-trade of the two classes of people among the Santals who deal regularly with the occult- the magicians and the witches. They are bitterly opposed to each other's influence, and they clash for the most part on the battleground of sickness and disease. An exhaustive treatise on the Santal attitude to disease has been published, and shows conclusively that, as with ghosts so with sickness, the ideas of the Santals are common to all the lower strata of society in North India.[1] These ideas are not simple but complex, and range from the realm of the rational to the fantastic. Disease is sometimes ascribed to natural causes, particularly when the chain of causation is fairly obvious and can be repeated in a series of experiments; there is a whole class of food described as *batol*, which means that it is unwholesome. There are hundreds of remedies that require no supernatural aid to make them effective. Some remedies are the property of all, while others are the property of individuals and the knowledge of their ingredients is a closely guarded secret. Chaitan of Churimara began his career as a physician in response to a specific need. When he was a young man a friend had come to him in great distress and said that his boy was vomiting blood. He turned to Chaitan and asked him if he knew of any medicine that would be good for the boy. Chaitan was so sorry for his friend that he promised to do something, although when he said this he had no notion what he should do. As he was setting out for his friend's house he prayed to *Cando* and asked that he might be shown what he ought to do; at the same time he shut his eyes and kicked at the soil. As he opened his eyes again he saw a plant, which he immediately dug up. He ground the roots to make a medicine, and the boy recovered from his sickness. Since then he has applied the same remedy to many other cases. One of his patients had been extremely ill, he said, but was now the father of four or five children! He has been in great demand as a physician, and claims that *Cando* subsequently revealed many remedies to him. Sometimes it is claimed that remedies are made known in dreams. The plant that was first revealed to Chaitan was the *upel ḷandi* plant, which has a red flower.

[1] P. O. Bodding, *Studies in Santal Medicine and Connected Folklore*, *Memoirs of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. X.

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CHAPTER 10

BIRTH AND INITIATION

858 The birth of a child is an occasion for rejoicing, and the event is announced by saying: "The new relation has arrived." Children are spoken of as the gift of *Cando*, which indicates that they are considered to be assets to the family. It is true that boys are rather more welcome than girls; every family desires that the first child should be a boy who will ensure the survival of that particular family within the clan. A boy can inherit his father's lands, and one day he will be required to assist at his father's funeral ceremonies and perpetuate the worship of his own ancestors. Girls are welcomed, though not to the same degree. Through their marriages they will in due course extend the range of the family's relationships, but they bring but a small economic return to their parents, and the bride price received at marriage is not comparable to the expense of bringing them to maturity. Where a family consists of both boys and girls in equal proportion the girls are well treated, and when later on they go to other homes their places will be filled by daughters-in-law. When, on the other hand, a woman gives birth to a succession of daughters she is likely to feel the displeasure of her husband's relations. A third or fourth daughter born into a home where the husband's mother reigns supreme does not enjoy much prospect of survival. Children are valued from the first because of their potential working ability. A villager, on hearing that a birth has taken place, responds at once with the question: "What is it? Does it carry on the shoulder (a boy) or does it carry on the head (a girl)?" Or he may say: "Is it a hunter or is it a water carrier?"[1]

842 There are Hindu shrines in the area to which Santal women resort along with others when other means of securing the birth of a longed-for child have proved of no avail. A spirit who can grant the boon of children resides near the village of Raniband at the summit of a hill which rises abruptly from the plain and is the highest point in the whole area. Cases have been reported of Santal man and wife making the climb together in order to present an offering. In most cases, however, the husband preserves an air of indifference; if his wife fails to bear a child he is

[1] Another way of referring to the sex of children, though not at the time of birth, is for a parent to say: "I have three *iri* and three *erha*", which signifies three boys and three girls. *Iri* is a cultivated millet (*Panicum crusgalli*, L.) and *erha* is a cultivated grain (*Setaria italica*, Kunth).

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addition to the bride price, to receive a cloth for the bride's mother, one for her father's eldest sister and one each for her two grandmothers.

Some agreement must also be reached about the time of the marriage. This must not take place in the month in which either the bridegroom or bride was born. Formerly, I was told, there was no other prohibition regarding the month. Nowadays, however, the general practice of Hindus in Northern India is followed. Astrologers are not consulted, but marriages may not take place during the rains, and the most popular months are during the spring when the harvest has been gathered in and food is abundant. When the time is approaching, the actual date of the wedding is arranged by the go-between, and the *giṇ* is used to mark off the days remaining.

The whole community in both villages is vitally concerned in the due celebration of the wedding, and this fact is emphasized by the role of the village officials. The *jogmāṇjhi* of the bride's village acts as the master of ceremonies from the time when the marriage booths have to be erected until the end. The headman of the bridegroom's village does not take part in the preliminary visits by virtue of his office, but when the two families immediately involved are satisfied that they wish to proceed, both headmen are called in. They have to be present when the engagement is confirmed, and they are consulted about suitable dates. The final "contract" at the climax of the wedding celebrations is entered into by the people of the two villages, and it is made by the respective headmen. The village priest also plays a part, for the community involved in the marriage includes the spirits, who are guardians of the welfare of the tribe, and the ancestors, guardians of family and clan. Their blessing has to be sought. In an interesting passage Dr. Verrier Elwin says of the marriage ceremonial of the tribes of the Maikal hills: "There is little religion in it." On any definition of religion it would be difficult to maintain this thesis with regard to Santal marriage. The whole passage is quoted here, for the rest of what is said does apply in most of its detail to the Santal form of marriage: "We have already spoken of this ceremony as a work of art. There is little religion in it, but it has great social and symbolic value. It is hard to conceive of a better way of impressing on a man and woman their social and sexual union. The tying together of the clothes, the exchange of rings, the first meals together, the ceremonies by the river that symbolize mutual aid in domestic, sexual and food-obtaining activities, are of great significance.

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bitten by a snake as he slept on his verandah one night. He did not rouse until it was too late to apply any effective remedy. His relatives who were present subsequently told a story of sublime self-command and faith. He bade them farewell: "Do not be concerned about me, but always believe in God; although my body is being destroyed, my spirit cannot be destroyed. And follow the example of my brothers and myself, who never had a quarrel." He read to them from his New Testament. In the words of a nephew who wrote me a letter shortly afterwards: "Many people came from round about when they heard of his death to show their grief. My uncle preached the name of Jesus right up to the time of his death."

Dosoroth ascribed his freedom from the molestation of spirits to his belief in the One God. The heathen Santal considers that the process of transferring allegiance from one to the other is fraught with grave dangers. Christians put themselves beyond the pale of the tribe and so they do on the whole escape from the attention of the malevolent powers to whom Santals as a whole are subject, but when a recent convert meets with misfortune it is because the spirits have been able to get at him. A young man in Barikul died from typhoid about six months after his Baptism, and the common verdict was that the *bongas* had taken their revenge.

Many of the early converts were first drawn to the Church in order to gain some freedom from oppression. From time to time examples occur of people who wish to escape trouble which they have reason to fear from their own people. Families have been baptized when the mother has been accused of witchcraft and they have been persecuted accordingly. In the early period a family became Christian through the man having married a cousin. Although cross cousin marriages are not entirely prohibited, they are frowned upon as they serve to complicate relationships. This couple were subjected to local persecution, and at one stage, I am told, they feasted their fellow villagers in an effort to be reinstated in society. Ultimately, however, they sought the refuge of the Christian community. Their home was within two miles of Sarenga and so they were near to other Christians. Others sought relief from harassing landlords and their agents. They thought that the right way to deserve the help of the missionaries was to do first what the missionaries asked them to do in matters of religion. For although missionaries did relieve much distress, they proclaimed that what they really wanted to see was a change of heart in the people. There

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[The Santal Christian Community]

enjoined by custom. Food taboos and those relating to dress and ornament are respected and the rules governing clan exogamy are accepted without question. The reason underlying these facts is probably that even when the myth has been discredited the code of behaviour is charged with emotions that continue to enforce it as long as the village environment has been little affected.

In their attitude to the ancestor cult many of the Christians have evolved a compromise. Some families known to me started their Christian life on the basis of a bargain with the spirits. In one village in particular where there are now eight Christian households in a community of twenty-eight families, at least three of the original families to be converted left one of the brothers outside the Church. The unbaptized members of these families were charged with the responsibility of maintaining the fellowship of the family with their ancestors. As one of those concerned said: "If the offerings had not been continued, then the ancestors might have shown their displeasure at all the children becoming Christian." Others who have become Christians continue to make offerings. In no case have I ever been able to discover evidence that Christians make any animal offerings, but during the festival which takes place at the end of the month of *Pus* many Christians make the cakes that are traditionally associated with the festival and make offerings of them to their immediate forbears. The family, represented by the living and the dead, continues to be a focus of powerful sentiments, and the Christians are evidently aware of a void in the teaching that they have received in regard to it.

The identification of *Marak Buru* with Satan incidentally provides a mythological foundation for propaganda in favour of total abstinence, for it was he who taught the first parents to brew beer. It is difficult to estimate the extent to which such propaganda has had the desired effect among the Christian community. Some of its members are known and respected as total abstainers, a fact that illustrates the introduction of a changed standard of values. On the other hand, the majority of village Christians certainly drink beer. The attitude of the community towards the older people who indulge is tolerant, and the habit is explained largely by the fact that the provision of beer is important in showing hospitality towards visitors. Drunkenness, however, is not condoned and it is certainly no longer a form of communal rejoicing. Drinking to excess, where it occurs, has become a private habit surrounded with secrecy.